

# Pressklipp om Afghanistan



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Årgång 11



## PRESSKLIPP OM AFGHANISTAN

□ är ett samarbetsprojekt mellan Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) och Afghanistankomiteen i Norge (AiN). □ utges varannan månad som en nyhetsservice för SAKs och AiNs medlemmar, lokalkommittéer och styrelser. □ detta nummer är sammanställt och redigerat av Börje Almqvist och Peter Hjukström. □ pressklipp till kommande nummer mottages tacksamt från läsekretsen till adress: Svenska Afghanistankommittén, Sturegatan 16, 114 36 STOCKHOLM, SVERIGE (Märk kuvertet med "Pressklipp"). □ prenumerationspriset för 1999 är 250 kronor och inbetalas på pg 64 23 90-9, Svenska Afghanistankommittén. Notera på inbetalningskortet att betalningen avser prenumeration på "Pressklipp".

□ Detta nummer är presslagt 990512



# Från harem till hockey GP

## 26/3-99

"ÖST ÄR öst och väst är väst och aldrig mötas de två", försäkrade Rudyard Kipling i ett av sina inspirerade ögonblick.

Att det kiplingska tänkespråket inte alltid kan tolkas ordagrant bevisades faktiskt av en äventyrslysten Stockholmslös för närmare 80 år sedan. Den unga damen var kristnad till Hilma Helena Aurora, bar det vardagliga efternamnet Nilsson och hade sitt föräldrahem i Västerhaninge.

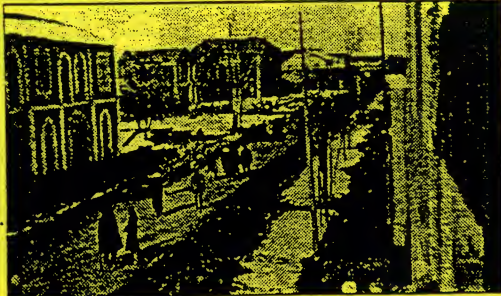


## Böcker

En dag i början av 1920-talet ville mamsell Nilsson ha omväxling i tillvaron och reste därför till Berlin för att leva livet, officiellt för att studera tyskt musik- och teaterliv. Där träffade hon i nöjesvirlarna sin statliga österländska prins-ministersonen Muhammed Asim Khan från Kabul i Afghanistan – och blev upp över öronen förälskad i honom.

DEN afghanske ynglingen föll i sin tur pladask för den ljushyllta svenskan, och snart nog friade han. Äktenskapet mellan öst och väst – mellan Asim Khan och Aurora Nilsson – ingicks den 5 augusti 1925, och de nygifta såg förtröstansfullt fram mot en samvaro i rosenrött med Berlin som den självklara hemadressen och reträttplatsen.

Då kom – på julaftonen 1926 –



Ingen lyx. Livet i Kabul blev på intet sätt någon dans på rosor för Aurora Nilsson. Livet, utanför hovet, var enkelt och maken en hustruplågare.

något av ett dråpslag. Till följd av politiska förvecklingar i Afghanistan fick Asim Khan denna dag, helt oförmodat, en telegrafisk beställning från det kungliga hovet i Kabul att snarast återvända till hemlandet, där en viktig befattning i ett av departementen väntade honom.

Aven Aurora hälsades välkommen till den afghanska huvudstaden. Från och med nu var det Asien, det karga bergslandet "mitt i världen" och ett nytt kulturmönster som gällde. Resan anträdde och via Paris, Marseille, Korsika, Port Said, Suezkanalen och Aden infann sig det unga paret i Bombay. Aurora misströstade och ville hoppa av; hon hade vantvits under större delen av färden, och med skräckblandad förtvivlan tyckte hon sig se hur Asim steg för steg blev alltmera omeroglig. Han drabbades av oömtiverade vredesutbrott och plågades av svartsjukans mörka demoner.

Den 5 maj 1927 överskred Rora Asim Khan, alias Aurora Nilsson från Västerhaninge, gränsen till Afghanistan i närheten av Dacca uppe i det vilda Khyberpasset på drygt 1000 meters höjd över havet.

Det var förmodligen första gången i historien en svensk fot trampade afghansk jord! Ökenräven och geologen Sven Hedin kom aldrig så långt som Aurora gjorde och den våghalsige Paul Mohr – karriärdiplomaten – nådde målet i Kabul först på senhösten 1928.

I sitt nya hemland drabbades Aurora av en veritabel kulturchock. Samtidigt gick hennes äktenskap definitivt överstyr. Efter tio månader i ofrihet bakom hushållets murar och den

Från Västerhaninge till Kabul. Aurora Nilsson reste till Berlin i början av 1920-talet för att studera musik och teater. Men en österländsk ministerson ville annorlunda och äventyret tog nya vändningar.

obligatoriska slöjans tygvägar – och efter lika många sorger och bedrövelser – lyckades hon till sist utverka skilsmässa från sin man. Något skilsmässodokument hade aldrig tidigare existerat i de afghanska hävderna.

Tidigt på morgonen den 5 mars 1928 befann sig Aurora Nilsson "av svenskarnas stam" än en gång vid den strategiska gränsbommen uppe i Khyberpasset. Denna gång strålade hon av oförfalskad glädje; äntligen var hon på väg hem, fattig och utblottad men desto rikare på erfarenheter.

MEN HUR GICK det sedan? frågar man sig oroligt. Fick de båda kontrahenterna från öst och väst någonsin frid i sinnet och ro i sina illa tilltygade själar?

Muhammed Asim Khans öde blev grymt. Efter att ha mist sin lagvrigda hustru förvandlades han till en skugga av sitt forna jag, och desperationen tilltog. I början av 30-talet lärer han sig med politiska terrorister och gick under jorden.

Upplösningen kom den 7 september 1933. Iförd mörka glasögon och beväpnad med pistol stegade den protyske Asim Khan denna dag in på den brit-

tiska ambassaden i Kabul och mejade i rask följd ner tre personer, som alla ljöt en ögonblicklig död. Ungefär i samma veva mördades Afghanistans ambassadör i Berlin. Därefter var turen kommen till Nadir Shah – den regerande kungen – som kallblodigt dräptes av en annan attentatsman.

Asim Khan greps omedelbart efter sitt död och hängdes i gryningen sex dagar senare.

Aurora Nilsson visade sig vara mera seglivad. Vid återkomsten till Sverige konsulterade hon först en spökskrivare och totade på stående fot ihop ett tyskt grundmanus om sitt afghanska äventyr – boken översattes med den säljande titeln Flykten från harem (Bonniers 1928).

Därefter gifte hon sig med målarmästaren Karl Abrahamsson från Södertälje, mera känd som "Kalle Aber", Sveriges främste ishockeyspelare på 30-talet. Enligt obekräftade uppgifter träffades Kalle och Aurora på en bordell i Istanbul av alla ställen, enligt andra källor strålade de samman efter en hockeymatch i Prag.

SVERIGE SVENSKA AFGHANISTAN KOMMITTEN

Redan 1946 gick Kalle Aber ur tiden, drabbad av hjärtslag nära på Centralen i Stockholm. Som nybliven änka öppnade

## Efter månader innanför hushållets väggar hade hon fått nog

Aurora syateljé och verkade några år även som ungdomsledare i Södertälje sportklubb – SSK. Hon somnade in lugnt och stilla på ett pensionärshem 1972 vid 78 års ålder.

Bland hennes efterlämnade tillhörigheter fanns ingenting som ens avlägsen påminde om hennes vistelse i Orienten en gång i tiden. Inte ens den egna boken hade hon kvar.

ÄNDÅ urskiljer vi, i den slutliga analysen, Aurora Nilssons västerländska fotavtryck i den afghanska 1900-talshistorien, låt vara oavsiktliga och nått och jämnt synliga för blotta ögat. Likväl finns de där!

Mats Parner

KÄLLA: Aurora Nilsson; Flykten från harem, 1928

## Att inte rubba balansen

Upptraget som katastrofslöjkoordinator i Afghanistan de senaste månaderna har varit tufft, säger Svante Yngret, nyss hemkommen från sitt delegatuppdrag.

Det senaste året har landet drabbats av både en mängd naturkatastrofer, misilangreppet från USA, militära manövrar i Iran på gränsen mot Afghanistan samt flyktingströmmar.

Den hjälp som bland annat kommit från Svenska Röda Korset till jordbävingsoffren har fungerat så bra den någonsin, kunnat göra under omständigheterna, menar Svante. För att kunna rädda liv använde man sig av helikoptrar och tyglan. Stora områden i landet är oförliga att nå på annat sätt. Det finns inga bilar och därmed heller inga vägar.

Det viktigaste vid en katastrof som den i Afghanistan är pengar, framför allt till transporter, och en hel del kan köpas på plats. Vad gäller förordningar fanns det redan i förhand flydda beredskapslager i närheten, säger Svante.

– Givetvis finns det alltid en risk för att det kommer in för mycket öromärkta pengar till ett visst område eller ändamål. Om trycket på att något ska göras är stort är det lätt att göra mer skada än nytta. "Do no harm". Arbetet på flykten handlar ju om göra så lite skada som möjligt och att inte rubba ett lands normala balans, säger Svante.

Alester som katastrofslöjkoordinator har handlet om att leda en komplex operation i ett land där det har varit oroligt i lugn. Vad beförhållningen i Afghanistan mest av allt önskar sig är stabilitet och säkerhet. Omsatt var man lyckor om talibanerna och det som de står för finns det vissa aspekter som gör situationen mer stabil om talibanerna håller de områden de inagit, anser Svante, väl medveten om att åsikten kan anses som kontroversiell.

– Svenska Röda Korset har ställt upp på ett bra sätt och har en lång tradition, stor kunskap och intresse för Afghanistan. Det har varit skönt att ha det stödet på hemmaplan, säger Svante.

Kriterierna har hela tiden varit att först och främst rädda liv. Därefter att få rätt material på plats i rätt mängd vid rätt tillfälle. I ett senare skede har arbetet handlat om rehabilitering. Den senaste delen är också den svåraste. Ansvaret för återuppbyggnaden måste nämligen komma i afghanisken själva ta hand om. Där är väl uppgitt att vara med och stötta initiativtagandet, menar Svante.

– Det är mycket att ha fått göra på ett arbete som det har varit helt omöjligt att planera. Det ställer stora krav på flexibilitet och att man tycker om att bringa reda i ett förändrigt kaos.

ENKLT NY 17/9/98





## Bonddottern från Södertörn som roade sig i tjugotalets Berlin och sen hamnade i den blivande terroris- ten Asim Khans harems...



Av  
TOMAS LÖFSTRÖM

I en kryptiskt formulerad bisats i sin bok "Resa till Afghanistan" från 1930, en klassiker i Afghanistanlitteraturen, nämner diplomaten Paul Mohn en föga världsberömd föregångare av svensk nationalitet i detta fjärran land, en kvinna vid namn Aurora Nilsson, "i olyckligt äktenskap föräddad med den sympatiske Asim Khan".

Denne Asim Khan, lärare på tyska skolan i Kabul och Mohns tolk, skulle ett par år senare ikläda sig rollen som terrorist och skjuta ner tre tjänstemän på den brittiska legationen i ett frustrerat försök att åstadkomma en comeback för den reformivrande kung Amanullah som störtats 1929. Effekten blev emellertid den motsatta: incidenten gav kung Nadir Shah en förevändning att eliminera oppositionen. Därmed sattes slutlig punkt för Amanullahs försök att modernisera Afghanistan.

Det skulle dröja sextio år innan ett nytt försök gjordes i och med den kommunistiska statskuppen 1978. Som bekant misslyckades även det, med rysk ockupation, inbördeskrig, ödeläggelse och reaktionär backlash som följd.

Men vem var Aurora Nilsson?

**Hon var en bonddotter** från Södertörn som på 20-talet rörde sig i nöjesvirlarna i Berlin. Där träffade hon den teknisk-studerande Asim. De gifte sig så småningom, och hon följde med honom till Kabul. I stället för den palatstillvaro hon måhända föreställt sig lästes hon in i Asims "harems". När denne gick miste om utlovade regeringsbefattningar och pengar började tryta avtog hans kärlek till Aurora och hans västerländska polityr flagnade. Hans bitterhet tog sig bland annat uttryck i att han började misshandla sin hustru som till slut lyckades utverka

skilsmässa och flydde ur landet.

Om sitt olyckliga äktenskap och de prövningar hon fick utstå i Afghanistan berättade Aurora sedermera i en bok som kom ut på Bonniers förlag 1928: "Flykten från harems". Den utges nu i nytryck av Svenska Afghanistankommittén med utmärkt inledning av Anders Forsberg, som bland annat lyckats lösa gåtan med bokens tillkomsthistoria (i varje fall till hälften): det visar sig att den är översatt från ett tyskt manus av den kände översättaren Curt Berg.

**Auroras bok** - som för övrigt låg till grund för min roman "Gryningsflickan" 1986 - är en på en gång personlig och distanserad skildring där dåtidens afghanska samhälle framträder ur ett unikt kvinnligt vardagsperspektiv. Aurora får med tiden, som hon själv skriver, "en överblick över åtskilliga afghanska förhållanden". På en anmärkningsvärt proffsig prosa, detaljerat och inte utan humor beskriver hon kvinnovärlden bakom lerväggarna och slöjorna hushåll, kläder, smink, hygien, erotik, liv och död - men också intrigen i den aristokratiska och kungafamiljen. Kung Amanullahs reformer har hon däremot knappt lagt märke till.

Hennes berättelse är naturligtvis en variant av den välbeprövade orientaliska sheikromanen, men den är egentligen ganska fri från fördomar och skulden för Asims övergrepp och den östvästliga kärlekens misslyckande lägger hon mindre på honom än på "de förhållanden av vilka han som afghan var beroende".

Det är på det hela taget en fascinerande historia som dessutom får särskild aktualitet idag när Afghanistans kvinnor efter decennier av försiktig emancipation under talibanernas "fundamentalistiska" regim brutalt kastats tillbaka till en situation av förbud och förnedring som i mycket liknar den Aurora vittnar om.

Aurora Asim Khan (Aurora Nilsson): Flykten från harems. Svenska Afghanistankommittén.

Tomas Löfström är författare och kulturjournalist.

# Malmstigen berättar om Afghanistan på årsmötet

barn tillbragt sammanlagt fem år i Afghanistan under åren 1992 och 1996. Anders och Tina har där arbetat för den kristna biståndsorganisationen IAM i staden Herat i västra Afghanistan.

1995 blev Anders regionalt ansvarig för IAM:s arbete med ansvar för det utländska teamet, samordningen av projekt och ansvar för relationerna till de afghanska myndigheterna, talibanerna tog kontroll över Herat 1995 och andra organisationer. Hus-trun Tina arbetade under tiden på ögonsjukhuset med att förbättra vårdrutiner och undervisa sjuksköterskorna.

Under mötet på söndag i Korskyrkan kommer Anders att dela med sig av de personliga upplevelser som familjen haft under åren i Afghanistan. I ord och bild kommer han att berätta om mötet med landet, dess kultur och folk. Han kommer även att beröra orsakerna bakom den nuvarande konflikten i landet och förutsättningarna för hjälp- och samarbete i en situation som den i dagens Afghanistan.

**Anders Malmstigen**  
Anders Malmstigen är 36 år och har tillsammans med familjen, hustrun Tina och tre barn, kunnat vidarebefordra nästan 39 000 kronor till faderskolan Bibi Fatmazuhra. Detta till stor del tack vare eleverna på Helenaskolan i Skövde som genom sina insamlingsinsatser bidragit med inte mindre än 35 000 kronor. En del av dessa elever är deras lärare. De återstående pengarna kommer från den insamling som gjordes vid Barnens Dagfirandet i Skövde i maj förra året samt det gemensamma åtagande som lokalkommitténs styrelse årligen bidrar med.

Under hösten 1998 genomförde Skövde/ Skaraborg sin andra Afghanistanvecka och denna gång inriktades den på att rapportera till medlemmar, bidragsgivare och allmänhet angående de svåra förhållanden i norra Afghanistan under början av februari och slutet av maj samt de insatser som SAK gjorde i samband med detta.

**Lokalplanet**  
På lokalplanet kan man konstatera att lokalkommittén framgångsrikt fortsatt sitt arbete med information om den omfattande hjälpverksamheten i Afghanistan. Lokalkommitténs medlemsantal har under 1998 ökat med omkring 30 procent och de egna samlingsarna har under året inbringat 14 658 kronor. Dessutom har

Anders Malmstigen är inbjuden av Mariestads Baptistförsamling (Korskyrkan) och Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAKs lokalavdelning i Skövde/Skaraborg, för att deltaga i församlingens, föreningens och allmänhetens sina erfarenheter och intryck från att under åren 1992 till 1996 ha arbetat för biståndsorganisationen IAM International Assistance Mission i Afghanistan. Han och familjen har under denna period bött sammanlagt fem år i huvudstaden Kabul och staden Herat i västra Afghanistan.

**Fadderskola**  
I samband med årsmötet på söndag i Korskyrkan i Mariestad kommer en utställning om lokalkommitténs fadder-

ell stöd har kommit från flera hjälporganisationer i Sverige. Sjukvård med allmän kirurgi och ögonklinik har etablerats. Alfabetisering och skolor ger vuxna och barn en framtid. Inkomstbringande arbete har många fått genom tillverkning av solugnar och matknyting. Undervisning i effektiv jordbruk ger flyktingarna hopp för framtiden i ett förväntat fritt hemland.

Ellens uppgift har bland annat varit att skriva läroböcker i hygien och hälsovård. För att undervisa om utlagda landminors bedrägliga faror, skrev Ellen en speciell lärobok. Den uppmärksammades av FN, som önskade att hon skulle bredda dess innehåll. Antalet böcker i sociala och medicinska frågor har med tiden blivit sjutton.

Under de år Ellen gjorde sin speciella insats bland flyktingarna i Pakistan var hon tidsvis lärare vid teologiska skolan i Dehra Dun. Här har Erikshjälpen och PMU varit generösa bidragsgivare.

Nu har hon som pensionär lämnat såväl sitt arbete i flyktinghjälpens SERVE som lärartjänsten men hennes tanke och hjärta är dock kvar i Asien. Det kunde ingen som hörde radioprogrammet undgå att förstå.

JEAN MALM

Hemmet  
Van  
25/2  
-99

> Johan  
son.  
sjuksköt.



## AFGHANISTAN



Yta: 637 397 kvadratkilometer. Vid den enda folkräkning som ägt rum i Afghanistan 1978 beräknades befolkningen uppgå till 15,54 miljoner. Under det decennium som följde Sovjets invasion 1978 flydde uppskattat ringvis tre miljoner afghaner till Pakistan, två miljoner till Iran och 150 000 till andra länder. Under kriget beräknas dessutom 1,3 miljoner människor ha dödats.

Religioner: Muslimer 99 procent (varav cirka 80 procent sunni- och resterande shiamuslimer). Språk: Omkring 30 språk talas. Pashtu som talas av den pashtunska folkmajoriteten är tillsammans med den afghanska dialekten av persiska officiella språk. Uzbek, turkmen och kirgiser i norr talar turkiska språk.

Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) startade som en proteströrelse mot Sovjetunionens ockupation av Afghanistan (1979 - 1989). I dag är SAK en etablerad biståndsorganisation, partipolitiskt obunden, som samarbetar med Sida.

4 000 brunnar har konstruerat med avsnitt sedan 1993. Kommitténs nätverk består av 8 000 medarbetare (sjuksköterskor, lärare, ingenjörer, administratörer o s v) och hjälper 160 000 barn dricka 30 000 liter, ett till två liter.



Eva Ollén, Luleå, har dragit igång projekt Norrbrunn som ska samla in pengar för brunnar i Afghanistan. Vatten betyder liv och rent vatten kan rädda livet på många som i dag dör som spädbarn. FOTO: BENGT ÅKE PERSSON

# Brunnar räddar liv

Nu ska Eva Ollén från Luleå samla in 260 000 kr för att hjälpa barnen i Afghanistan

## LULEÅ

Spädbarnsdödligheten i Afghanistan är skrämmande hög. Vart fjärde barn dör innan det fyllt fem.

Mycket beroende på avsaknaden av rent vatten.

Nu vill Eva Ollén, Luleå, att Norrbotten bygger brunnar i Afghanistan.

– Den som grävt en brunn åt andra har inte levt förgäves, säger Eva Ollén i Svenska Afghanistankommittén.

Hon har själv dragit igång ett projekt som kallas Norrbrunn.

Syftet är att samla in, minst, 260 000 kronor under 1999.

Det skulle räcka till 260 brunnar i Afghanistan.

## 4 000 kronor

För varje tusenlapp biståndsorganet Svenska Afghanistankommittén skänker ger Sida 4 000 kronor.



Det här är Eva Olléns "syster" Nadia som hon träffade i hissen för några år sedan. Nadia, afghanska, bor i Sverige.



En liten afghansk flicka som är glad. Hon bor i byn Dehmadra som har tillgång till vatten. Eva Ollén i Luleå samlar in pengar för att kunna gräva brunnar i Afghanistan.

5 000 kronor är vad en brunn kostar att gräva. Eva Ollén jobbar förortrutet och envist. Hon berättar att hon söker kontakter i hela samhället. Inom politiken, kyrkan, vålgörenhet o s v.

– Vatten är en förutsättning för allt. Jag har valt att arbeta med att samla in pengar till brunnar. Vattenprojektet är ett kvinnoprojekt, säger Eva Ollén. Hon är utbildad socialarbetare som flyttade till Luleå från Stockholm eftersom hennes man fått arbete på universitetet.

Intresset för Afghanistan väcktes våren 1994.

## Hjärtefråga

I hissen träffade hon en kvinna, Nadia, som berättade att hon kom från Kandahar i Afghanistan.

– Samma kväll satt jag och löste Dagens Nyheters korsord. Där stod det "Kandahardam" på nio bokstäver vilket blev "Afghanska".

– På så sätt inledes vår vänskap, säger Eva Ollén. Projekt Norrbrunn har blivit en hjär-

tefråga för Eva Ollén.

– Det finns 260 orter i Norrbotten så jag tänkte att målsättningen var en brunn i Afghanistan för varje ort i Norrbotten. Nu hoppas jag att den målsättningen överträffas, säger Eva Ollén.

– Nu har jag hittat något att bita i. Jag har väl nästan blivit besatt men det känns som om man får mycket tillbaka om man deltar i biståndsarbete.

Har du själv besökt Afghanistan?

– Nej, men jag drömmer om att åka dit när mina barn har blivit vuxna, säger Eva Ollén.

Brunnarna innebär inte enbart liv till landsbygdens folk. Mellan 15 och 20 familjer kan dela på en brunn.

Den innebär också arbetsstillfällen

PETER LUNDQVIST

Om du vill ge ett bidrag till projekt Norrbrunn så har Svenska Afghanistankommittén postgirokonto 90 07 80-8. Skriv Projekt Norrbrunn 1999 på inbetalningskortet.



En sanning som inte kan upprepas tillräckligt ofta gånger kan man tycka.

(S)

# Brunnar ger liv

NSD om 28/4-99



Mohammed Zia, th, från afghanistan tackar Karin Lindström i mitten som skänkte sina 70-års presenter till nya brunnar. Pengarna förmedlades av Eva Ollén genom projekt Norrbrunn.

FOTO: KURT ENGSTRÖM

## LULEÅ

Karin Lindström, Luleå, tackade nej till presenter när hon fyllde 70 år.

– Jag sa till alla som frågade vad jag önskade mig att om de ville ge något så skulle de skicka pengar till projekt Norrbrunn.

Nyligen fick Karin Lindström besök från Afghanistan. Mohammed Zia kom och tackade för Karins gåva och berättade om hur brunnarna blir till.

Karin Lindström bor i en ombonad lägenhet på Örnåset i Luleå. Hon fyllde 70 år den 1 april.

– Jag tycker att jag har allt jag kan önska mig och ville inte ha några fler prylar. Jag hade hört talas om projekt Norrbrunn så jag berättade för min familj och släkt om detta.

Norrbrunn är ett projekt i

Norrbotten.

Eva Ollén driver projektet som har som mål att samla in pengar till 260 brunnar i Afghanistan.



## 5 172 brunnar

Pengarna går till den svenska Afghanistankommittén. De samarbetar med Sida och hittills har 5 172 brunnar grävts i olika byar.

– Varje brunn ger vatten till cirka 280 personer, säger Eva Ollén.

Mohammed Zia är en av 8 000 afghanier som arbetar i svenska Afghanistankommitténs projekt.

## Samarbete

– Det som skiljer vårt arbete från FN:s är att de flesta anställda är afghaner och att vi ger hjälp till självhjälp.

Brunnarna grävs och byggs i

samarbete med bybefolkningen. Varje brunn kostar cirka 5 000 kronor. Dessa pengar går till gjutning av betong och pumpen. Grävandet och byggandet står byborna själva för.

Varje krona som Eva Ollén samlar in i Norrbotten blir fem, i och med att Sida bidrar med fyra.

– Behovet av brunnar i Afghanistan är enormt. Det skulle behöva byggas runt 40 000 om behovet av vatten ska tillgodoses, säger Mohammed Zia.

## Hjälp med skolor

Han tillägger att det är möjligt att gräva brunnar över åtminstone 60 procent av landets yta.

– Det som skiljer den svenska verksamheten från andra är att kommittén finns kvar och hjälper människorna trots att taliberna har tagit makten. Vi har



NSD den 9 april 1999.

kunnat hjälpa byar med skolor för flickor och vatten.

– När jag fyllde år sa en av mina släktingar att det inte spelar någon roll om pengarna skickas till Afghanistan eller om jag hade fått en resa i present, säger Karin Lindström. Men det tycker jag.

EVA BERGSTEN SUNDBERG



# Talibanernas land

Talibanerna har tagit makten i Afghanistan utan att ha brukat speciellt mycket våld. Den här bilden skiljer sig från den CNN och våra media visar.

TEXT OCH BILD: Henrik Hedelin

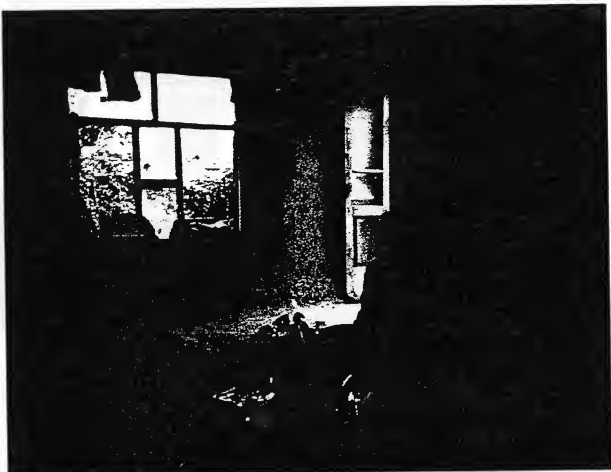
Mannen i hörnet säger ingenting. Han tittar tomt framför sig. Hans kropp är lite hopkru- pen och han verkar inte reagera på vad som på- går runt omkring honom. Han har inte ens lagt märke till allt liv och uppståndelse kring den utlänning som kommit till den lilla landsort- skliniken. Läkaren på kliniken och hans med- arbetare försöker ivrigt undan patienter och me- diciner för att bereda den viktiga västerlän- ningen plats. Personalen verkar skämmas lite för sitt enkla lerhus men ser till att det myck- et snart finns te och mullbär på bordet.

Lite beklämd av denna gästfrihet och att jag upptar behandlingsrummet dricker jag snabbt upp mitt te och lyckas få personalen att fortsätta arbeta trots att jag är på besök. Utan- för behandlingsrummet står och sitter folk i en kö som fortsätter en bra bit utanför kliniken. Där sitter gamla och unga män i skjortor och pösiga byxor och kvinnor dolda bakom sina burkas. Många har med sig ett eller flera barn med smala axlar och radda ögon. Barnens grät blandas bara ibland med ett samtal.

När jag druckit upp mitt te sitter mannen i hörnet fortfarande kvar, på en av de få stolarna och i den åtråvärda skuggan. När jag går för- bi tittar han upp på mig och hans ögon får lite liv när han säger "which country?" med en in- te alltför stark brytning. Jag svarar att jag kom- mer från Sverige och vi börjar prata med var- andra på en konsensusengelska med mesta- dels enstaviga ord.

Mannen heter Wakil och det visar sig att han en gång i tiden läste till ingenjör på uni- versitetet i Kabul och där hade snabbt upp lite engelska. Han ser ut att vara runt sextio men är troligen snarare i fyrtioårsåldern. Jag har lärt mig att inte fråga för afghaner vet ald- rig hur gamla de är. Medan han pratar med mig rättar han till sin lilla huvudbonad och rät- tar på sig så att hans spretiga och grå skägg vi- sas i dess fulla prakt. Han är mycket fördig men ivrig att få mig att förstå när han börjar be- rätta om sig själv. Wakil hade, säger han, en fru och två barn men hustrun och dottern dog för många år sedan i ett ryskt bombanfall mot de- ras hemby och sonen dog för några år sedan i de interna stridigheterna. Han fortsätter lakoniskt berätta om hur hans syskon har dött under olika omständigheter och hur han inte har någon kvar.

Familjen och släkten är allt för en afghan och Wakil tittar mig i ögonen och säger att han inte har något att leva för. "Jag lever för att det är Allahs vilja, att trotsa den vore en stor synd",



Läkarna i samspråk i det obligatoriska lerummet på kliniken.

säger han med djupt allvar. Han fortsätter sin berättelse och samtidigt som hans eget liv må- las upp för mig får jag hela Afghanistans tra- gedi presenterad på ett sorgligt komplett sätt.

**Afghanistan är ett splittrat och sargat land.** Genom historien har det område som i dag är Afghanistan varit en mötesplats för kulturer och folkslag och en skådeplats för många krig. Under kolonialtiden var landet en bricka i maktspelet mellan England och Ryssland och senare mellan väst och Sovjet. 1979 invaderade Sovjet landet och upprättade en marionetter regering.

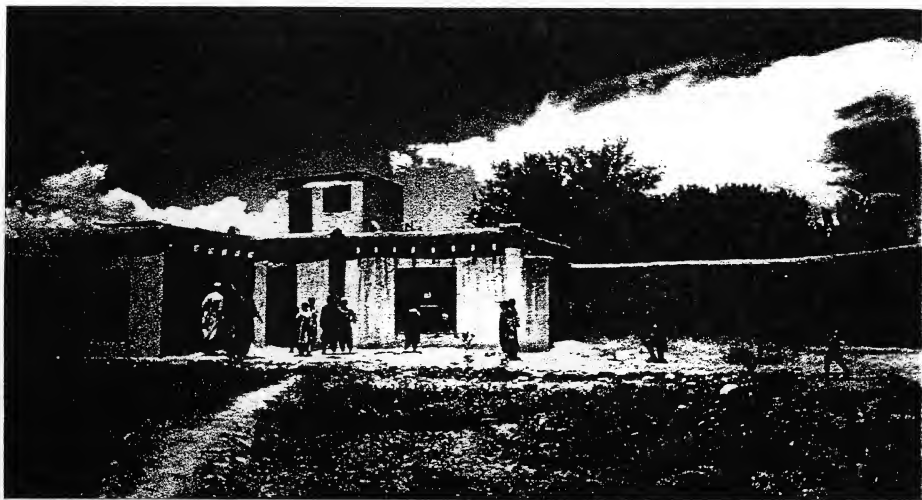
Detta var starten till tjugo års inbördeskrig. Först ett motståndskrig mot den sovjetiska ockupationsmakten, ett segt och blodigt krig som förstörde landets infrastruktur och drab- bade civilbefolkningen på ett obeskrivligt grymt sätt. Senare, när Sovjet drog sig ur lan- det i slutet av åttiotalet, började de löst sam- manhålla mujahedingrupperna slås om den sön- derfallande centralmakten med ett styck- at land som följd. Ingen litade på någon och landet delades upp i zoner kontrollerade av lo- kala krigsherrar stödda av något av grannlän- derna. Striderna fortsatte.

De etniska motsättningarna spelade en

stor roll i denna splittring. Pashtunerna, som är den största folkgruppen, dominerar i öst och syd och har oftast haft makten i Afghanistan på något sätt. I norr finns i stället mycket tad- zjiker, turkmener och uzbekier och i de cen- trala provinserna hazarer som är ett mongo- liskt folkslag. Dessutom finns en mängd mind- re etniska grupper, alla med egna kulturer och eget språk. Den enda riktigt gemensamma faktorn i landet är religionen. Så gott som alla är muslimer och islam genomsyrar vardagsli- vet hos varje afghan. Islam är en självklarhet för afghanerna och det var islam som ställdes mot "västerländsk dekadens" i striderna mot Sovjet.

**1995 dök en ny grupp upp – talibanerna.** Åretagen användes islam som motiv för upp- ror. Taliban betyder ungefär "koranstudent" eller bara "student" och talibanerna består av unga män från *madrasas*, koranskolor. Här un- dervidas de i islam och den "rätta tolkningen" av de heliga verserna.

De sade sig vilja rena landet från korrup- tion och oenighet. Afghanistan skulle bli en enad islamistisk stat. Med en mycket strikt tolkning av islam och generöst ekonomisk stöd från Pakistan började de i södra Afghanis- ►



*Sjukvårdsklinik på landsbygden i östra Afghanistan.*

stan och hade 1997 kontroll över tre fjärdedelar av landet. Talibanernas flesta erövringar har skett utan att skott avlossats, de lokala krigsherrarna har i stället köpts över. Även Kabul intogs nästan utan strid. De senaste månaderna har talibanerna även lyckats inta de viktigaste städerna i norra Afghanistan. De två oppositionsgrupper som finns kvar är nu trängda och talibanerna kan sägas ha den verkliga makten i landet.

**Talibanerna är noga med att påpeka att de är en religiös rörelse och inte en etnisk grupp** men i praktiken är de pashtudominerade och deras tolkning av islam är närmast släkt med den traditionella pashtuiska. Denna tolkning har sedan varit grunden för den *sharia*, islamska lag, som införts i landet. Talibanernas *sharia* täcker varje liten detalj i en människas liv och består av många förbud som låter absurda för en västerlänning. Att en kvinna inte skall lämna hemmet utan lagligt manligt sällskap, alltid bära en "burka" som täcker ansiktet med ett nät och inte avslöjar några kroppsformer och att alla måste be vid de bestämda tidpunkterna är självklart. Vidare är det förbjudet att sjunga, för barn att flyga drake och för män att ha för kort skägg. All avbildning av levande föremål, t ex genom fotografering, är också förbjuden. Vissa förbud, som till exempel förbudet för kvinnor att arbeta inom annat än sjukvård, har tagit bort möjligheten till försörjning för många familjer, framför allt för de tusentals änkor som finns efter alla år av krig.

Talibanernas hårda regler har dock nästan eliminerat brottslighet. Tjuvar blir obönhörligt en hand avskuren och en mördare blir avrättad på samma sätt som han mördade. Ständigt kommer nya regler och hårdare straff. Taliba-

nerna verkar trots konsekvenserna, det försvårade biståndsarbetet och omvärldens protester inte ändra sin intention att omvandla Afghanistan till en i deras ögon ren islamistisk stat.

Det är runt middagstid och som varmast på dagen. Lerväggarna svalkar lite men jag har ändå svårt att hålla koncentrationen och svetten droppar ständigt ned i ögonen när jag skall läsa. Jag har övertalat klinikföreståndaren att jag inte behöver sitta i behandlingsrummet för att arbeta utan sätter mig i det rum som finns i alla afghanska hus. Jag slår upp den första "registration book" i dagens bunt. Här finns alla patienter kliniken har tagit emot registrerade. Varje patient har en smal rad som enda journal där kön, ålder, diagnos och utskrivna medicin finns nedskrivet med spretiga bokstäver.

**Klinikerna drivs av Svenska Afghanistan-kommittén** och har engelska som språk men med stavningen är det lite si och så. Har frekvensen kvinnor minskat eller ökat på klinikerna sedan talibanernas maktövertagande och vad har hänt med olika åldersgrupper? Det är det jag är här för att utrona och jag börjar gå igenom patienter i april 1996; kvinna 17, malaria, klorokinfosat 30 tabletter; kvinna 35, huvudvärk, aspirin 10 tabletter, man 20, dysenteri, tetracyclin 16 tabletter osv.

Det är lätt att tro att i ett så krigshärjat land som Afghanistan skulle många patienter vara traumafall men på fem veckor såg jag nästan inga skottskador eller andra krigsskador. Det folk sökte sig till klinikerna för och det folk också dog av sin sjukdomar var enkel art – diarré, lunginflammation, malaria. Sjukdomar som skulle kunna förhindras med bättre kost,

**M**ajoriteten av afghanerna är jordbrukare och bor på landsbygden. Här bland klippiga berg och torra slätter ligger bördiga dalar där marken ofta ger skörd tre gånger om året. Förutom odlarna av ris och vete har många bönder odlingslitter med opiumvallmo som i juni månad står kala när blomman har fallit sina blad och bara kapseln med sina inristade fröer står kvar. Afghanerna själva skulle aldrig använda opiumprodukter då det är mot deras tolkning av islam, en tydlig kontrast mot ex Iran. Traditionellt afghanskt jordbruk använder sinnrika och avancerade bevattningssystem som tar år att bygga. Dessa är ofta förstörda eller igenslammade efter krigsåren och jordbrukets avkastning är inget av vad det skulle kunna vara.

Eftersom de flesta bor på landsbygden och både infrastruktur och kommunikationsmöjligheter är minimalt utvecklade har centralmakten, vilken den än varit, alltid haft liten kontroll över de breda folklagren. Även talibanerna har sin makt koncentrerad till städerna. På landsbygden fortläro livet mest som det alltid gjort. Men det som märks på landsbygden efter talibanernas maktövertag är att det faktiskt är fred i de områden de kontrollerar. Det finns inga rövarband och inga lokala stridigheter. Ett faktum som lokalbefolkningen uppskattar och har lett till det stöd talibanerna trots allt har på många ställen.

Men fred är bara början. Hela landet måste byggas upp på nytt med brunnar och bevattningskanaler, skolor och folkhälsovård. Något som kommer att ta tid och kosta pengar. ■

HH

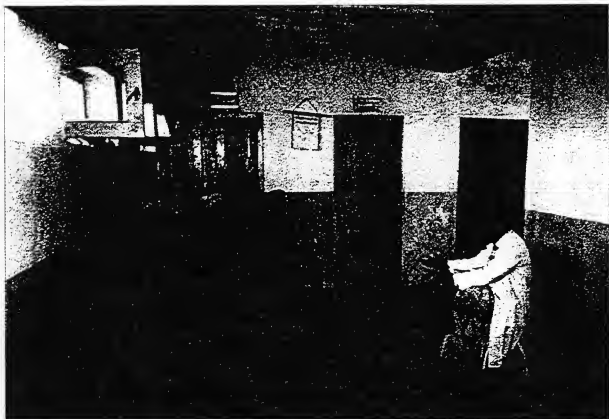


rena brunnar, latriner och myggnät.

I det traditionella afghanska samhället fanns en stor tilltro till den lokala helbrädgö-  
raren, en tilltro som nu överförs till väster-  
ländsk medicin och framförallt de två magiska  
botmedlen pillret och sprutan. En patient i Af-  
ghanistan tycker sig inte ha fått behandling  
om han inte har fått ett recept på piller. Helst  
av allt vill man ha en injektion. Detta har lett  
till att utanför den kvalificerade sjukvården  
finns en stor marknad för medicinförsäljning.  
I basarna är den farmaceutiska sektionen  
stor och sjuka kan välja på gröna, gula och blå  
piller och på en del ställen kan man få infusion  
av droppväska (i bästa fall) av valfri färg.

**Jag går tillbaka till behandlingsrummet** när  
jag arbetat klart. En kvinna som rullat upp när-  
delen av sin *burka* faller snabbt ned igen  
när hon ser mig komma. Jag får en liten skymt  
av hennes ansikte och hon vridit bort huvu-  
det och flyttar längre in bland kvinnorna i hör-  
net. På väg in i behandlingsrummet möter jag  
Wakil. Han har just varit inne hos doktorn och  
när han ser mig skiner han upp: "swedish doc-  
tor!" utbrister han och skakar energiskt min  
hand trots att det var mindre än två timmar se-  
dan vi sågs. Han ber mig följa med in i be-  
handlingsrummet och inleder en kulsprute-  
konversation med läkaren som utmynnar i att  
läkaren trött förklarar att Wakil vill att jag skall  
skriva ut medicin till honom. Som många har  
Wakil mycket större förtroende för väster-  
ländska läkare och det tar ett tag innan jag  
lyckas övertyga honom om att jag är helt över-  
ens med den afghanske läkaren och att medicinen  
kommer fungera jättebra trots att det är  
så få tabletter.

På landsbygden i Afghanistan kallas alla  
som har sjukvårdsutbildning för "doctor" och  
det blev en titel jag fick trots mina ensträna  
försök att förklara att jag bara var medicine



*En afghansk hälsoarbetare undervisar en grupp patienter i sanitet och sjukdomsprevension.*

kandidat. Under sovjettiden fanns ett funge-  
rande universitet i Kabul som var gratis för stu-  
denterna och många läkare, av bägge könen,  
utbildades. Det finns ingen brist på afghanska  
läkare men en brist på afghanska läkare i Af-  
ghanistan och då framför allt kvinnliga. De  
flesta har flyttat. De akademiker som utbildas  
på universitetet i Kabul bildade en liten  
medelklass som i viss mån skaffade sig väster-  
ländska värderingar och anammade väster-  
ländsk klädestil. Talibanernas fundamen-  
talism har slagit hårdast mot dessa. Dessutom  
använder talibanerna Kabul för att statuera ex-  
empel och ser där till att deras regler verkligen  
efterföljs.

Wakil försöker mycket envist bjuda in mig på  
te till sitt hus. Jag tackar nej och får ett besvi-  
ket ansiktsuttryck till svar. Av alla egenskaper  
hos afghaner är kanske gästfrihet den mest  
framträdande och var man går möts man av  
erbjudanden om te, mat eller frukt. Det hände  
att jag bodde hos fem fattiga familjer och som  
en självklarhet slaktade de en av sina få kyck-  
lingar och bjöd mig på tillsammans med det  
bästa hushållet kunde erbjuda.

**Det var dags att åka vidare** och vi klättrade  
upp på flaket till pickuppen. Dr. Saidal var den  
läkare som var min guide och tolk under be-  
söken på klinikerna och under färden på obe-  
fintliga vägar, över floder och med otaliga  
punkteringar började vi prata om landet, kri-  
get och religionen. Saidal berättade med för-  
klarande ton att islam om den tolkas rätt ger  
svar på varje fråga om livet och rätt och fel.  
Han ger exempel ur Koranen och förklarar hur  
de skall tillämpas, jämför med andra religioner  
och är mycket påläst. Han tar många verser  
bokstavigt och lägger fram bevis för det.

Han berättar hur han under kriget många  
gångar sett martyrer som dött när de kämpat  
för en sann sak eller varit oskyldiga och berät-  
tar att han som läkare kan garantera att dessa  
kroppar inte ruttar. Saidal säger också att han  
vet om att sovjetiska trupper hade speciella  
sprutor de använde för att kroppar skulle rut-  
na trots att de var martyrer. Jag försöker dölja  
min skepsis mot de senaste påståendena och  
vi fortsätter prata i flera timmar medan vi far  
fram över de afghanska slätterna med snö-  
klädda berg som kuliss.

Tvårs genom Afghanistan löper den jätte-  
lika bergskedjan Hindu Kush med några av  
världens högsta berg. Landskapet i östra Af-  
ghanistan växlar mellan stora platåer och mäk-  
tiga massiv. De krafter som skapade dessa



*På besök hos välbärgad afghansk familj. Arnskeförfattaren i mitten.*

*Fortsättning på sidan 62*

Tack alla ni som sparar med hjärtat.

# Hopp om totalt förbud mot minor

NASSJO

Sedan i måndags råder ett förbud mot minor i stora delar av världen

–Det är ett viktigt steg även om stora länder som USA inte skrivit under avtalet, säger Peter Hjukström, förbundssekreterare i Svenska Afghanistankommittén. I onsdags kväll talade han på biblioteket i Nässjö.

Minor är ett förbudsakt vapen som slår utan urskilning. Det drabbar till 90 procent civila befolkningen och är ett dåligt vapen även när kriget lagt slut.

## 10 skadas i Holland

–I Holland skadas eller dödas fortfarande runt 10 personer varje år av minor utlagda under första eller andra världskriget, säger Peter Hjukström som i onsdags var i Nissjö för att berätta om minor och arbetet mot dem.

I ett land som Afghanistan, där krig fortfarande pågår, skadas och dödas varje år mellan 5 000 och 7 000 människor av minor.

## Svåra att få bort

–Det stora problemet med minor är att de är svåra att få bort, säger Peter Hjukström. De är svåra att få bort eftersom de inte har ett specifikt skuld belägg. De är ofta afghanistans jordens genomgående.

Afghanistan är ett av jordens mest minrade länder tillsammans med Kambodja och Angola. Dåligt Peter Hjukström saknar minorerna egentligen strategisk betydelse men de är svåra fattiga människor som man så vill. –En liten Rosetta-sten minner om att de har köpa men är en dålig att köpa men

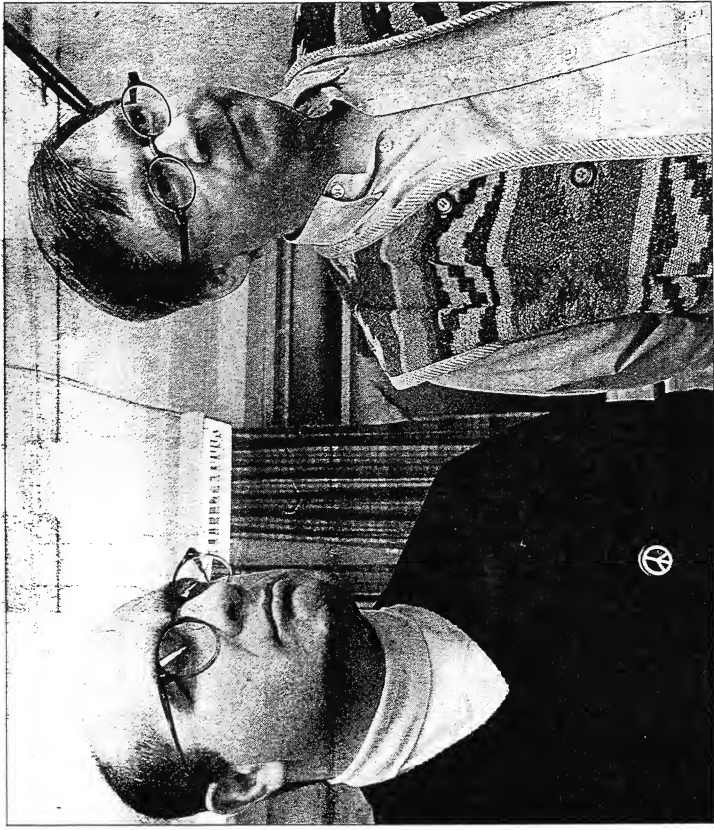
enorma borg är fortfarande aktiva och i februari 1995 skötte ett kraftigt skalv som dödade över 5 000 människor. Det var vinster och kallt och trakterna svårastomliga. Afghanistan var på vägen kom ett nytt skalv, ännu med tusentals dödsfall.

**Talibanerna har nu makten** över nästan hela Afghanistan och de har skapat den stabilitet folket så länge har längtat efter men samtidigt får befolkningen i allt större grad leva under talibanernas fundamentalistiska ok. Det är viktigt att komma ihåg att de flesta folkgupper alltid lev med religiösa regler men talibanernas fundamentalistiska och orsonliga doktrin leder till ett ökande missnöje och frågan är hur långt de kan gå. De etniska konflikterna blir inte heller lösta av att talibanerna får den militära makten. Nyligen skedde under talibanernas regi en massaker på hazarer i norra Afghanistan vilket speglar de motståndare som finns och som skulle underminera varje centumtallt bygd på endast en etnisk grupp. Om det skall bli fred i Afghanistan krävs också att grannländerna slutar pumpa in pengar till landets olika parter, ett scenario som i dag verkar oroligt framtidsfullt efter USA:s bombningar av misstänkta terroristbaser i de östra delarna. Konflikten mellan Iran och talibangruppen var nu i sommar tidvis farligt nära kolspunkten.

Jag har besökt en ny klinik. Jag bodde hos föreståndaren och vi pratade om möjligheterna till fred till sent på natten medan vi drack te. När jag nu skall lämna kliniken nästa dag säger han som avslutning på diskussionen "jo kanske, insh'Allah (om gud vill), blir det fred till slut, och glöm inte säga till regionkomret att terracviktet är slut".

**Sidat och jag skall också** skjutas är och innan jag skall gå upp på flaket ger han mig en hälsning från min syster. Han ber mig säga den lina jag gör för det vore en stor synd om en så god människa som jag inte fick chansen att komma till himlen. Snickrad av omtanken och dess värna, komvårdigad av detta land med älskade gamla, kompromisslösa, gästfärd och hälsade invånare skumpar jag återigen fram över det karga landets skulptur.

Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) är en av de största hjälperorganisationerna i Afghanistan och gör mycket nytta på många plan. SAK nås på vardagar tel 08-660 73 20. Postgironummer 90 07 8-8.



Farshid Ardabili-Farshi från Svenska freds- och skiljedomsföreningen och Peter Hjukström talade om de skador minor orsakar.

de tillverkare i massupplaga av vapentillverkarna (tjänar förstås pengar på dem, säger Farshid Ardabili-Farshi från Nissjö Freds- och skiljedomsföreningen).

**Länder saknas** Viktiga länder, som USA, Ryssland och Italien saknas bland undertecknarna. Det är enligt Peter Hjukström inte skrivits under av alla. spridning och lagring har inte skrivits under av alla.

använder minor och USA har redan sagt att de inte ska användas. Det är inte heller tillåtet att skriva på inneskrivet vi är inte soldat för alla. Det skapar en internationell opinion mot länderna som använder minor och USA har redan sagt att de inte ska användas. Det är inte heller tillåtet att skriva på inneskrivet vi är inte soldat för alla.



# Bombattack nästa steg?

## Afghanska ledare: USA känner sig hotat av bin Laden-rykten

Anbrott 15/12-99

● Usama bin Laden, 42, den saudiarabiske mångmiljonären som har anklagats för att vara terrorismens bankir och i Washington betraktas som "USA:s hende nummer ett", har gått under jorden i krigsforödda Afghanistan.

Försvinnandet, som bekräfts av den talibanska regimen, har utlösts av en flod av rykten om nya nära förestående amerikanska bombattacker mot hans terroristläger och tillhåll i staden Kandahar och västra delarna av landet.

Talibanerna, som desperat försöker avstyra en attack mot sina egna baser, anses skydda honom trots att ledaren mullah Amar de senaste dagarna uppgett ha placerat honom i husarier och berövat honom möjligheterna att kommunicera med omvärlden.

Det kan smälla när som helst, menar afghanska ledare i Peshawar, gränstaden i Pakistan som sedan 1996 blivit talibanernas rekryteringscentrum.

Samma bedömning gör den kände journalisten Rahimullah Yusufzai som är en personlig vän både till bin Laden och de talibanska ledarna.

### Kusten klar för anfall

– USA känner sig hotat av spekulationer kring bin Ladens kontakter med Saddam Hussein och tycks redan ha "kusten klar" för ett flyganfall, sa han till Arbetets medarbetare timmarna innan han själv gav sig iväg till Kandahar i hopp om en intervju med den jagade och fruktade terroristledaren.

Grunden lades redan vid biståndsgivarnas möte i Tokyo i början av december då USA och England insisterade på ett förbud för frivilligorganisationer att sända utländska hjälparbetare in i Afghanistan.

De underminerar möjligheterna att uppnå en lösning av säkerhetsfrågan, var det skäl som den amerikanske chefdelegaten då anförde.

Timmarna efter robotbeskjutningen av bin Ladens baser den 20 augusti i föl dödades en FN-anställd i Kabul av upprörda afghaner med påföljden att FN evakuerade all sin personal ur landet.

### Två månader

Förbudet har nu gällt i taliban-kontrollerade områden i två månader och bara ett tiotal av de drygt 50 biståndsgivarna har brutit mot det. Flera till priset av förlorade bidrag från Washington och London.

Svenska Afghanistan-kommittén, som gjort en annerlunda bedömning av säkerhetsfrågan, tvingades efter samtal med svenska UD att följa "rekommendationen" men fick i förra veckan sanktion för sin medarbetare Pia Karlsson till ett veckolångt besök.

Malmöbo som i Islamabad

Hennes besök avslutades i fredags i Islamabad



Usama bin Laden tror nu ha försvunnit i eller från Afghanistan.

dags och den ende svensken i landet i dag är malmöbbon Sidney Pettersson, som befinner sig i Taloqan i norr som behålls av oppositionen.

Spekulationer i Islamabad, huvudstad i Afghanistan, går ut på att USA känner sig hotat av kontakterna mellan bin Laden och Saddam Hussein som erbjuder honom politisk asyl.

### Kärnvapen

Uppgifter om att den religiösa fanatikern, som anklagas för att tentat mot de båda amerikanska ambassaderna i Kenya och Tanzania som krävde 224 döds-

offert, försöker skaffa nukleära laddningar och biokemiska va-

pen har ökat oron och fått president Clinton att bestämma sig för ett dräpplag mot terrorismen.

Mullah Amar, Afghanistans emir, är angelägen om att vinna internationellt erkännande för sin regim.

Men han saknar både vilja och möjlighet att tillmötesgå USA:s krav på utlämning av bin Laden som nyligen tog hans 16-åriga dotter till sin tredje hustru och som dessutom betraktas som "gäst" i landet.

Genom att låta den karismatiska saudien "försvinna" hoppas han också mot alla odds kunna köpa tid, innan han blir tvungen att ge upp. bin Laden har blivit till en utmaning i politisk belastning för talibaner

na vilket är en orsak till att de i december tillät en irakisk delegation ledd av Farouk Hijazi, ambassadör i Turkiet och Saddams förtroende, att besöka landet för samtal med mannen som i dag har 40 miljoner kronors belöning på sitt huvud.

Pakistan uppges ha vägrat att upplåta baser för en operation mot bin Laden och talibanerna men inga hinder lär resas i Tadzjikistan eller Uzbekistan som nu har egna talibaner i att slåss mot talibanerna i Peshawar



Bo Gunnarsson

# Afghanistan behöver all hjälp

Arbetet 7/3 -99

SÅLLAN HAR ett ändamål varit mer angeläget än Radiohjälpens nya insamling för jordbävningsoffren i Afghanistan, ett land som ligger i ruiner efter tjugo år av konflikter och som dessutom drabbats hårt av naturkatastrofer.

Tre svåra jordskalv på mindre än ett år har krävt tusentals människoliv och bokstavligen talat vridit utvecklingen i ett av världens fattigaste områden tillbaka till stenåldern. Allt saknas och behoven är enorma vilket väl illustreras av den mystiska epidemin som nyligen krävde drygt 300 dödsoffer och som i slutändan visade sig vara influensa: undernäring, fattigdom och hygien gör den minsta lilla infektion dödlig.

Lika viktigt är det långsiktiga biståndsarbete som trots enorma politiska och praktiska svårigheter pågår och i vilket Sverige länge spelat en viktig roll.

Det faktum att landet styrs av en regim som begår avskyvärda övergrepp mot de mänskliga rättigheterna, härbargerar misslyckade terrorister och tillåter tillverkning av hård narkotika får inte komma emellan.

LIKA LITET som nödhjälpen går till talibanerna så gör utvecklingshjälpen det.

Alltsedan den amerikanska missilattacken mot den saudiarabiska mångmiljonären Osama bin Lades terroristläger i augusti i fjol så har FN och de flesta biståndsorganisationer hållit sig borta från Afghanistan. I december skärpte USA



och Storbritannien sina krav mot talibanerna och straffade alla utländska frivilliga som inte drog tillbaka samtliga utländska hjälpare från landet.

DET ÄR ALLTSA biståndskris igen, en raden av otaliga sådana. Evakueringar av utländsk personal blev till en rutin under mujahedins inbördes stridigheter som ödelade Kabul och problemen har fortsatt trots att talibanernas maktövertagande innebar en förbättrad säkerhetssituation.

Samtidigt har allt striktare dekret från ledarskapet i Kandahar försvårat hjälparetarnas arbetsförhållanden och de heliga krigarnas misstro mot deras afghanska anställda har lett till mängder av incidenter och arresteringar.

Talibanerna är medvetna om att 60 procent av Kabuls befolkning är beroende av nödhjälp och att behoven är stora också på landsbygden. Men deras attityd till biståndet kan sammanfattas med det uttalande som en ledare nyligen gjorde: Allah är den störste givaren.

Eftersom deras målsättning och visioner inte sträcker sig bortom islamiserings införande så saknar också FN och hjälporganisationerna tyngd bakom de hot om tillbakadragande som man då och då anser sig tvingade att göra.

LANDETS EMIR, mullah Omar, har gjort uttalanden om att hela Afghanistan skall rensas från icke-muslimer och från allt icke-muslimskt inflytande. Men en så-

dan åtgärd förutsätter en kontroll av landsbygden och dess många makthavare som troligen är ouppnåelig för talibanerna.

Om centralmaktens dekret skulle iaktas så vore troligen all hjälpverksamhet omöjlig redan i dag. Men provinsernas talibaner är mer pragmatiska och inser behovet av utbildning, hälsovård och utveckling.

Svenska Afghanistan-kommittens verksamhet är ett lysande exempel. Trots förbudet mot utbildning av flickor över åtta år så lyckas man ge drygt 30.000 på landsbygden möjlighet att läsa sig läsa och skriva vilket är mer än någonsin under förkrigstiden. Totalt får 150.000 barn sekulariserad undervisning genom svenskt bistånd.

BLINDSKÄREN är många. Trots halv-årlånga förhandlingar har i ex inte FN lyckats nå någon överenskommelse med talibanerna i bl a säkerhetsfrågan och integritetsskyddet för afghanska medarbetare. Det anses dröja minst 10-15 år innan en fungerande centralmakt tar form. Alla intellektuella har redan flytt landet och inbördeskriget har bara förlovarat.

Biståndet till Afghanistan måste vila på humanitära principer och inte på vår motvilja mot dess härskare. Afghanistan får inte bli en nation av analfabeter. Så länge det är möjligt att nå ut till den fattiga befolkningen med hjälp så måste vi göra det.

Allt annat vore ett svek mot ett folk som redan övergett oss alltför många.

## Stridande i Afghanistan enas

15/3 -99

Efter fyra dagars förhandlingar om Afghanistan nåddes i går ett genombrott i fredssamtalen. Den talibanska regeringen och oppositionen kom bland annat överens om att bilda gemensamt parlament.

- Båda sidor gick med på att så snart som möjligt släppa 20 fångar var genom Internationella rödakorskommittén, hette det i en kommuniké efter fyra dagars överläggningar i Turkmenistans huvudstad Asjchabad.

### Gemensamt parlament

- Parterna kom överens om att upprätta ett gemensamt verkställande organ, ett gemensamt parlament samt ett gemensamt rättssystem.

Parterna i det långa och blodiga inbördeskriget är talibanregimen och oppositionskoalitionen, som håller smärre områden i norr.

Söndagens kommuniké utställdes av FN:s specialorgan för Afghanistan, UNSMA, på uppdrag av parterna. Samtalen fördes "i en anda av ärlighet, ömsesidig respekt och uppriktighet", hette det i texten.

Nästa omgång av förhandlingarna kommer troligen att äga rum i Afghanistan.

Enligt ryska nyhetsbyråer

skulle frågan om vapenvila lösas sig själv ifall enighet nås om regeringens sammansättning.

Oppositionens förhandlare Yunous Qanooni hoppades på en varaktig vapenvila efter nästa samtalsomgång. Parterna ville så snart som möjligt hålla nästa samtalsrunda inne i Afghanistan sedan man enats om plats.

Andrew Tesoriere, chef för UNSMA, beskrev samtalen i

Asjchabad som en vattendelare beroende på att de inte bara handlade om förtroendeskapande åtgärder utan även om grundläggande frågor rörande Afghanistans framtid.

### FN återvände i går

Talibanrörelsen kontrollerar förutom huvudstaden Kabul även 90 procent av landet. Oppositionen, vars militära styr-

kor leds av förre försvarsmministern Ahmed Shah Massoud, har trots stora förluster lyckats hålla områden i norr.

På söndagen återvände FN till Afghanistan.

- Det glädjer mig att återkomma till det land jag ansvarar för. I dag inleds FN-personalens flyttning tillbaka till Afghanistan, sade chefen för World Food Program, Michael Sackett i Kabul.

## "Uppgörelsen det viktigaste som hänt"

► Gårdagens uppgörelse är en stor händelse i ett land som har befunnit sig i fritt fall i 20 år, kommenterar Peter Hjukström, förbundssekreterare i Svenska Afghanistan-kommittén.

Att talibanerna nu har givit upp sitt anspråk på att själva utgöra den breda afghanistanska regeringen, är det viktigaste som har hänt i det afghanistanska inbördeskriget, menar han. Så sent som förra

veckan avvisade de alla krav på samregering.

En anledning är att Pakistan, Saudiarabien och Förenade Arabemiraten, som alla har erkänt talibanerna diplomatiskt, gradvis har distanserat sig från en rörelse som har visat sig alltmer korrupt. Därmed har det ekonomiska stödet utifrån sinat.

Bråket kring den saudiske terroristen Bin Laden kan ha haft betydelse för utvecklingen.

Uppgörelsen tyder på att de moderata krafterna inom talibanrörelsen har fått övertaget, menar Peter Hjukström.

- Men man ska inte vänta sig några omedelbara förändringar för kvinnorna. Det kommer att ta tid, men en logisk följd av uppgörelsen är att kvinnorna kommer att återta sina positioner inom sjukvård, undervisning och administrationen.

CHARLOTTE WENDT

MOSKVA/ISLAMABAD, TT-DPA  
► Parterna i inbördeskriget i Afghanistan enades på söndagen om att upprätta en gemensam regering och utbyta krigsfångar. Dessutom ska de FN-övervakade förhandlingarna fortsätta.

Samtidigt återvände FN till det svårt krigshärjade landet efter sju månaders avbrott.



# Spel om olja

I det krigshärjade Afghanistan skymtar nu en möjlighet till fred. Förändringar i maktbalansen i regionen har påverkat parterna i konflikten och de grannländer som backar upp dem. Spelet kring de gigantiska gas- och oljefyndigheterna i Centralasiens forna sovjetrepubliker spelar en viktig roll.

## Afghanistan kan hoppas på fred

**Avtal klart. Stridande parterna överens om gemensamt ledarskap. FN ska stå som garant.**

Av Mats Lundegård

DN 15/3-99

De stridande parterna i Afghanistan enades på söndagen om att upprätta ett gemensamt ledarskap för det krigshärjade landet och sålunda bereda väg för en bestående fred. Arrangemanget offentliggjordes efter tre dagars politiska förhandlingar i Turkmenistans huvudstad Asjchabad.

**Större delen** av Afghanistan kontrolleras sedan två år av talibanerna, en ultraortodox islamistisk rövare. Dess regering har utsatts för våldsamt kritik runt om i världen framför allt för dess institutionalisering övergrepp mot kvinnor och mänskliga rättigheter i största allmänhet. Både FN och många andra

hjälporganisationer som verkar i Afghanistan har tvingats lämna landet till följd av talibanernas förföljelser och maktmissbruk.

**Samalen i Asjchabad** hade emellertid sponsrats av värdorganisationens särskilda kontor i Afghanistan, USMA. Det kommer också att bli FN som ska garantera att överenskommelserna respekteras.

Vid en presskonferens på söndagformiddagen tillkännagav företrädare för talibanerna och deras motståndare, en lsa koalition av partier som tidigare regerat landet, att man enats om att bilda en gemensamt regerande, ett gemensamt parlament och därtill en ny rättsapparat. Rent konkret skulle

**F**ör en vecka sedan meddelades från Turkmenistans huvudstad Asjchabad att talibanerna, de ultraortodoxa islamisterna som kontrollerar större delen av Afghanistan, enats med sina arkefiender om att samregera. Som en goodwill-gest hade parterna kommit överens om att börja utväxla krigsfångar.

De uttalanden som gjordes i Asjchabad var i och för sig ganska allmänna och det är uppenbart att det ännu återstår komplicerade politiska förhandlingar innan en fredsavgörelse kan förverkligas. De gamla fienderna hade emellertid enats om att försöka sätta samman en gemensam regering och ett gemensamt parlament. De skulle också tillsammans bygga upp en oberoende rättsapparat.

Afghanistan har hemsökt av förhärjande inbördes strider alltsedan de sovjetiska ockupationsstyrkorna drogs tillbaka från landet 1989. Från början var det olika religiösa och politiska fraktioner växta ur det långvariga befrielsekriget mot sovjettrupperna som slogs om makten. Ingen kunde emellertid mobilisera styrkor nog att kontrollera mer än delar av landet. Så blev kriget självuppehållande. Varje försök att normalisera människors liv och börja någon slags återuppbyggnad av det ödelagda landet omintetgjordes.

**Talibanerna**, de ultraortodoxa islamisterna dök upp som politiska och militära aktörer i Afghanistan 1994. Ordet talib betyder student och talibanerna, som den oegentliga pluralen lyder på svenska var också unga skrifflärde. De var till största delen pashtuner, alltså hemma i den största etniska gruppen i landet. De hade fostrats i ortodoxa koranskolor i de stora flyktingläger som etablerades innanför Pakistans gränser när Sovjet marscherade in i Afghanistan 1979. De var renliriga muslimer av sunnitisk extraktion. Men väl så viktigt var att de därutöver åtnöt gediget materiellt stöd från Pakistan, enkanterligen detta lands underrättelse-tjänst ISI.

Talibanerna svepte in över ett land där människor led av stor krigströtthet och omfattande materiell nöd. De var väl organiserade och deras militanta, religiösa retorik var både trösterik och igenkännlig i ett samhälle där människor alltid varit konservativa muslimer. De upprättade snabbt en grovt tilltyxad men i huvudsak fungerande samhällsordning i de landområden där de tog över. Särskilt i de pashtuniska landsdelarna i söder och sydöst vann de ome-

delbart sympati. Deras djupt konservativa och kvinnofientliga samhällsordning skulle småningom väcka avsky ute i världen men på plats i Afghanistan var den mindre stötande.

Talibanerna intog huvudstaden Kabul på hösten 1997. De hamnade omedelbart på kollisionskurs med de utländska hjälporganisationer som fanns där. Deras övergrepp mot kvinnor – som plötsligt uteslängdes från arbete och utbildning och som drabbades av drakoniska straff om de överträdde den nya överhetens stränga förordningar – vållade en storm av kritik i omvärlden. Småningom blev situationen ohållbar och både FN och biståndsorganisationerna lämnade i föl staderna.

De nya härskarnas fälttåg bromsades upp sedan de intagit Kabul. Det var först i föl somras som de lyckades överflygla staden Mazar-i-Sahrif som varit den sista stöddepunkten för koalitionen av motståndsstyrkor. Den militära framgången var dock inte avgörande. Den så kallade norra alliansen som organiserats kring den tadjikiske krigsherren Ahmed Shah Massoud och landets före president Burhanuddin Rabbani kontrollerade också efter detta

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mellan tio och femton procent av Afghanistans territorium. Kriget gick på halvfart, en långsam nationell blodsutgjutelse, ett tröstlöst, andlöst våld.

Och så nu en fredsöverenskommelse.

Varför just nu?  
Afghanistans inbördeskrig har inte utspelat sig i ett vakuum utan utomstående intressenter har under alla år blandat sig i skeendet. Och det är också förändringar i olika maktbalanser som påverkat parterna i konflikten nu. Framför allt talibanerna har tvingats till en kursändring.

**Pakistan var med** från första stund när talibanerna började organisera sig och de har under alla år stött dem. Motiven för regimen i Islamabad har varit enkla: man har velat en etablerad och vänligt sinnad regim i Kabul, dels för att en sådan skulle underlätta för pakistanierna att hantera sina egna, inre konflikter – och den så kallade "talibanisering" som växt till i gränsområdena med Afghanistan, vagt separatistiska rörelser, en återuppväckt intresse-gemenskap mellan pashtuner i endera landet. Men därutöver skulle det kunna gagna Pakistan ekonomiskt om den politiska situationen i grannlandet kunde stabiliseras.

Den regionala ekonomin har blivit särskilt intressant efter Sovjetimperiets sammanbrott för tio år sedan. De nya republikerna som skapades ur kaos i Sovjets centralasiatiska områden sit-

samarbetet inledas med en utväxling av fyrtio krigsfångar under internationella röttkorsskommitténs överinseende. Ytterligare förhandlingar ska hållas inom kort, trojkan i Afghanistan.

Det man kommit fram till i Asjchabad förefaller mest vara en principöverenskommelse om att söka övervinna motsättningarna med politiska medel snarare än militära. Och så om både talibanerna och deras fiender och företrädare för FN uttalade sig optimistiskt efter samtalen återstår rimligen en lång och komplicerad förhandlingsprocess ännu.

**Det handlar om att strukturer och fördela makten i ett land som förhärjats av inbördes strider sedan de sov-**

jetryska trupperna drog sig tillbaka för mer än tio år sedan.

Den inre konflikten i Afghanistan har välat spänningar i en region som efter Sovjetimperiets sammanbrott fått allt större ekonomisk och strategisk betydelse. De flesta av Afghanistans grannländer har också manulerat motsättningarna efter förmåga. Talibanerna har från första stund haft stöd av Pakistan i seder all-

medan deras motståndare fått beskydd och hjälp av Iran och de nya centralasiatiska republikerna som ligger omedelbart norr om Afghanistan. Iran har agerat för att hjälpa shiitiska grupper i det av sunniter dominerade grannlandet – och sannolikt också för att söka

stävja vad man uppfattar som Pakistans expansionism.

**Också Ryssland**, som orot sig för talibanernas inlytande på dess muslimska minoriteter, har direkt eller genom ombud stött talibanerna motståndare. ► [mats.lundegard@dn.se](mailto:mats.lundegard@dn.se)  
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### Fakta/Afghanistan

Befolkning: 22,5 miljoner.  
Storlek: 647 500 kvkm (jfr Sverige: 450 000 kvkm).  
Gränser till: Kina, Iran, Pakistan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan och Uzbekistan.  
Stätsskick: islamiskt emirat (enbart erkänt av Pakistan, Saudiarabien och Förenade arabemiraten).  
Medellivslängd: 46 år (män) (jfr Sverige: 75) 45 år (kvinnor) (jfr Sverige: 80).  
Läskunnighet: 47 procent (män) 15 procent (kvinnor) jfr Sverige 99 procent för män och kvinnor.  
BNP/capita: 600 dollar (jfr Sverige 20 100 dollar).  
De islamistiska talibanerna erövrade Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul 1996.

D. N. 20/3 -99

# bakom afghanskt fredshopp

Alla de forna sovjetrepubliken som gränsar till Afghanistan stödjer talibanernas fiender i inbördeskriget.

På avstånd bidrar också Ryssland med pengar till den så kallade nordliga alliansen. Alla dessa länder oror sig för att talibanernas militanta islamism ska inspirera religiösa grupper till uppror i respektive land.

Ryssarna har också ekonomiska motiv för att Afghanistan förblir instabilt. Då kan nämligen gasen och oljan från de tidigare sovjetiska republikerna fortsätta att exporteras i befintliga oljeledningar över ryskt territorium.



centrum för de politiska förändringarna står en saudier som sedan många år bott i Afghanistan och skyddats av talibanerna. Det handlar om Osama bin Laden en man som av USA anklagas för att ligga bakom allehanda terrordåd runtom i världen och som av saudier utpekats som landsförrädare och avfälling. Amerikanerna bombade förra sommaren vad man kallade för bin Ladens högkvarter och träningsläger nära staden Kandahar i Afghanistan. Saudier har för sin del kallat hem merparten av sina diplomater i Kabul, i sig ett svårt bakslag för talibanerna. Hittills är det bara Pakistan, Saudiarabien och Förenade Arabemiraten som erkänt regimen i Kabul och varje inskränkning av de diplomatiska förbindelserna är smärtsam för en regim som vill byta sig ur sin isolering.

Talibanerna har avvisat amerikanska krav på att bin Laden ska utvisas men tidigare i vinter förklarade man att man inte längre visste var han befann sig. Beskedet har knappast blivit

**Hittills är det bara Pakistan, Saudiarabien och Förenade Arabemiraten som erkänt regimen i Kabul och varje inskränkning av de diplomatiska förbindelserna är smärtsam för en regim som vill byta sig ur sin isolering.**

kat USA och inte heller saudierna torde ha låtit sig bevakas. Också på hemmaplan har den nya, helgade överheten tappat i popularitet. Den har fullständigt misslyckats med att få igång ekonomi och civilt liv i samhället och afghanernas besvikelse yttar sig allt oftare i ogillande och kritik.

**Det är mot denna bakgrund man ska se talibanernas intresse för en fredsprocess.**

Kommer den att lyckas?

Jag tror att redan det som skett hittills är kvalitativt annorlunda än tidigare initiativ, säger Peter Hjukström på Svenska Afghanistan-kommittén. Det är anmärkningsvärt att talibanerna gått med på att dela makten. Tidigare har man alltid krävt totalt intyande över den politiska processen. Och kanske är det faktum att FN medverkat till uppgörelsen och all offentlighet också positivt. Det är inte alldeles enkelt för talibanerna att frånträda det de skrivit på.

Fast både Peter Hjukström och andra som följer utvecklingen i Afghanistan påpekar att avtalet i Asjchabad är ett första stappande steg på en lång marsch. Afghanistan har sargats av decennier av krig och motsättningar och landet ligger dessutom i en region som bär på gamla konflikter. Mycket kan gå snett innan en hållbar överenskommelse om fred faktiskt blir realitet.

ter nämligen på gigantiska fyndigheter av olja och gas. Frågan om vilka vägar dessa rikedomar småningom ska föras ur området bestämmer de kringliggande staternas intresse.

I Pakistan drömmar man om att rörledningarna ska dras över Afghanistan och ner till hamnstäder på pakistanskt territorium. Primärinkomsterna från exporten är i sig enorma också för ett transitland. På sikt skulle en utbyggnad av infrastruktur för gas och olja dessutom bädda för vidare utveckling och ekonomisk tillväxt.

Pakistans stöd för talibanerna har i stor omfattning finansierats av Saudiarabien som haft religiöst-ideologiska motiv för detta; man har velat stötta en ortodox, sunnitsk frände i en gudlös värld. Men saudiernas bevelsgrunder har också varit påtagligt världsliga. Man har också velat motverka sin ärkefiende Iran som efter Sovjetimperiets sammanbrott försökt söka tätare kontakter med de nya republikerna i norr och öster.

Irans intressen i Afghanistan be-

stäms också av hur naturtillgångarna i Centralasien ska styras. Iranerna erbjuder alternativ till gas- och oljeledningar över Afghanistan. Det är enklare och säkrare att bygga pipe-lines över iranskt territorium till Persiska viken, hävdar man. Men Iran ser sig som

**Iran ser sig som skyddsmakt för den stora, shiitiska minoritet som finns i Afghanistan. Den har tidvis utsatts för grova övergrepp av talibanerna.**

skyddsmakt för den stora, shiitiska minoritet som finns i Afghanistan. Den har tidvis utsatts för grova övergrepp av talibanerna.

Bortom det omedelbara grannskapet agerar också andra stater i konflikten i

Afghanistan. Pakistan har åtminstone tidigare fått eldunderstöd i sin politik av USA som - liksom Saudiarabien - velat stötta Irans politiska ambitioner i regionen. USA reagerade emellertid med argt avståndstagande när Pakistan detonerade sina kärnvapen i höstas och möjligen har en och annan hemlig dollar som gått till talibanerna via Islamabad frusit inne.

Ryssland har för sin del stött talibanernas fiender av enklare egenintresse. Man har helt enkelt oroat sig för att den militanta islamismen i Afghanistan skulle spilla över in i de forna sovjetiska republikerna och vidare in i det ryska hjärtlandet. Denna fruktan präglar också den politik som förs av länderna som direkt gränsar till Afghanistan. De stödjer alla, om än i olika omfattning talibanernas fiender.

Men allianserna i regionen har skiftat på senare år och möjligen har bland talibanerna till följd av detta väckts ett nytt intresse för fredlig diplomati. I

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# Invandrарverkets ovilja att släppa in Hashim kostade honom livet

## Afghansk TV-chef i exil mördades i Peshawar

**T**alibanerna börjar styra också här i Peshawar. Jag kände mig tryckt under de första åren men inte längre. Varken jag eller familjen vet av några fiender men ändå är vi hotade till livet från flera håll. Och min fru kan aldrig återvända hit... Jag förstår inte varför Sverige vägrar ge oss politisk asyl.

Så sa **Hashim Paktiani**, f d TV-chef i Afghanistan, till mig i en intervju i april.

Halvannen månad senare körde utlänningsnämnden över Invandrарverket och gav tillstånd åt hans hustru **Soraya**, 38, att av humanitära skäl stanna i Sverige.

### Hann aldrig komma iväg

Men familjen i Peshawar i Pakistan – Hashim, de fem barnen, hans mor, syster och svägerska, hann aldrig komma iväg.

Byråkratin på svenska ambassaden i Islamabad och Invandrарverket motsvarade sitt rykte: Deras uppehållstillstånd krävde ytterligare pappersexercis.

Måndagskvällen den 4 november – en vecka innan han skulle intervjuas av ambassadens konsulerare medarbetare – sköts Hashim ihjäl av en okänd mördare. På väg hem från kvarterets lilla marknad avrättades han med en kula i huvudet från nära håll. Bakifrån.

En trolig orsak är att han var kusin till Afghanistans f d president **Najibullah** som trots FN:s beskydd tillsammans med sin bror brutalt hängdes upp i närmsta gatstolpe och skändades sedan talibanerna på kvällen den 26 september 1996 intagit huvudstaden Kabul.

Ingen i Peshawar är överraskad: Kriget i

Afghanistan kräver allt fler liv också i Pakistan. Sedan talibanerna tog makten har sex kända afghanska oppositionella – alla moderata röster – mördats här och ytterligare ett 20-tal likviderades i Quetta och Baluchistan-provinsen enbart under november månad.

Ingen har gripits för dåden och i många fall har polisen inte ens gjort någon utredning.

**Afrasiab Khattak**, författare och ledare för medborgarrättsrörelsen i Nordvästra gränsprovinsen (NWFP), var kritisk då jag mötte honom i april.

– Familjen Paktiani står för allt som talibanerna hatar. Kvinnornas rättigheter, jämställdhet, socialism och de är släkt med **Najibullah**. Deras olycka är att svenska invandrарverket ser allt i svart och vitt. Kanske är det så att de hänger upp sig på Hashims roll. För dem stod han på fel sida i kriget. Han stod nära en man som ni kallar despot och diktator och anses därför medskyldig till det hemska som hände. Det är en horribel tolkning och fördröjningen av ett positivt besked kan kosta honom livet...

### Ville förändra samhället

Det gjorde det: Den ekonomiska kris som lamslagit Pakistan sedan i våras gav trots glädjebudet från utlänningsnämnden inte Hashim någon chans att skrapa ihop pengar för resan.

Jag frågade Hashim och jag frågade flera av mina väl informerade kollegor i Peshawar om hans förflutna.

Svaret var entydigt. Som nyhetsupplä-



Trots att mamma **Soraya** beviljats asyl i Sverige, Peshawar. Svenska myndigheters senfärdighet

sare i TV, senare chef för radio-TV och ansvarig för det statliga bolksförlaget så gjorde han propaganda för en sak som han trodde på. **Afrasiab Khattak**, som levde i exil i Kabul i nio år, känner familjen Paktiani mycket väl.

– Vi umgicks ibland och jag besökte Hashims kontor flera gånger, säger han. Han älskade inte precis ryssarna men han godtog deras närvaro som oundviklig. Han ville förändra det efterblivna afghanska samhället och sa ofta att det är fattigdomen och ryssarna som är vår huvudfiende. I efterhand kan man säga att hans tilltro till reformerna var naiv och att hans kunskap om förhållandena på landsbygden och religio-

## Talibanerna skyldiga till massaker i Mazar-i-Sharif

**N**är talibanernas armé i Afghanistan intog Mazar-i-Sharif i augusti genomförde soldaterna det värsta massmordet under inbördeskriget, rapporterade organisationen Human Rights Watch.

– Det rörde sig om systematiska mord på kanske 2 000 civila, oftast beroende på offrens etniska och religiösa identitet, sade **Patricia Gossman** vid människorättsorganisationens kontor, där man sammanställt berättelser från ögonvittnen, bland dem överlevande som tog sig till Pakistan efteråt.

Enligt rapporten sökte talibansoldaterna särskilt efter shiamuslimska hazaras

och dödade dem. Redan när de drog in i Mazar-i-Sharif den 8 augusti sköt talibanerna på allt som visade livstecken i vad vittnen kallade "mordisk galenskap". Under flera dygn genomförde sedan talibanerna hundersökningar och sköt ihjäl män och pojkar ur hazarafolket.

Dessutom greps tusentals män ur olika etniska grupper och transporterades till andra städer, såsom Shibarghan, Herat och Kandahar. De packades i stora behållare. Vid minst två tillfällen kvävdes många ihjäl där.

Enligt Human Rights Watch höll talibanernas guvernör **Manon Niazi** flera tal

i somras där han hetsade mot hazarerna och anklagade dem för att ha dödat talibaner som tagits till fånga vid striderna om Mazar-i-Sharif 1997. Organisationen drar därför slutsatsen att mordet inte var uttryck för spontana grymheter utan hade sanktion från talibanernas ledning.

Övergrep i staden blev först kända genom att Iran sade sig ha förlorat kontakten med landsmän när staden intogs. Talibanerna konstaterade att de var dödade och överlämnade liken av tio diplomater och en journalist. Sedan dess har spänningen varit stark, på randen till krig, mellan Iran och Afghanistans talibanregim.





*tvungades Hashim Paktiani och familjens fem barn, här på bild, att stanna kvar i pakistanska kostade, förre afghanske TV-chefen hans liv.*

nens roll var undermålig. Men både han och Soraya var ärliga i sin strävan...

Hashim själv såg sig mest av allt som en "tjänsteman".

– Jag jobbade i 28 år på kulturministeriet för olika regeringar och jag trodde på kampen mot feodalismen, sa han.

Både han och Soraya var medlemmar i Khalq, ett av de två kommunistiska partierna som i en kupp störtade Daoud-regimen den 28 april 1978. Ingen av dem var invigda i planerna, ingen hade heller ledande poster i partiet. Men Hashim var ordförande i partigruppen i TV-huset och Soraya ledde kvinnogruppen.

### Välkända TV-ansikten

Båda var som nyhetsuppläsare i TV väl kända ansikten i Kabul.

Deras bakgrund gjorde dem privilegierade. De kom från ansedda familjer – Hashim var chef för en maktigt pashtunsk klan och Soraya, dotter till en kamrer vid kungapalatset, hade vuxit upp i en intellektuell omgivning. Både hade blivit marxister under studieåren på Kabuls universitet.

När Najibullah störtades i april 1992 så föredrog de trots oro för mujahedins hämnd att stanna kvar i Kabul. Det var först ett år senare då en kusin mördats som de flydde till Pakistan. Soraya iklädd en svart burkha för att undgå upptäckt.

Soraya fick jobb på BBC:s sändningar på pashtu i Peshawar och rapporterade där om kvinnosituationen i Afghanistan och i

flyktinglägren, det ökade heroinmissbruket och hälsoproblemen. När talibanerna dök upp så blev det förstas än mer bevakning av kvinnoförtrycket.

Sommaren 1996 inbjöds hon av FOJO i Kalmar för att delta i en månadslång kurs för kvinnliga journalister i den tredje världen.

Hashim berättade för mig att han länge var tveksam.

– Talibanerna började redan visa sin makt i Peshawar och de godtog inte att afghanska kvinnor lämnade hemmet utan att eskorteras av en manlig släkting. Alla kände hotet i luften men Soraya ansåg att en eftergift var som att ge upp sina ideal.

Samma dag som kursen avslutades visades bilder av Najibs skändade lik hängande i en gatstolpe utanför FN:s gästhus i Kabul. Talibanerna hälsade över två tredjedelar av Afghanistan och Soraya insåg genast att det vore livsfarligt att återvända till Peshawar.

Talibanernas islamiska diktat styr nu i flyktinglägren utanför Peshawar och de finns också i förorterna dit exilafghanerna ur Kabuls medelklass och elit sökt sin tillflykt. I tidningen "Frontier Post" läser jag om hur män misshandlats bara för att de inte har skägg, och kvinnor anklagats av lokala jirgan för att vara horor eftersom de inte bär burkha.

– Dom kryper närmare och närmare, sa Hashim då han bjöd hem mig till familjens lya i Hayatabad.

## Invandrarverket okänsligt gentemot Sorayas situation

**D**in man hotas inte av politisk förföljelse.

Det var beskedet som Invandrarverket gav **Soraya Paktiani** efter en kortare utredning av hennes fall. Inte ett ord om henne själv eller de fem barnen.

I själva verket så innebar ju talibanernas maktövertagande i Kabul att det var hennes egen situation som stod i fokus, inte makens.

Många andra afghaner i Sverige är kritiska till Invandrarverkets bedömningar av situationen i Afghanistan och talar om en "likgiltig och kall byråkrati".

– Soraya Paktianis utsatta situation kan inte vara någon hemlighet för dem eftersom vi skrivit flera rapporter om kvinnosituationen, säger ambassadssekreterare **Mikael Lindvall** i Islamabad.

I ett år tvingades Soraya leva med utvisningshotet hängande över sig innan utlänningsnämnden ingrep och korrigerade misstaget som – tack och lov – bara ledde till en nervkollaps.

Svenska Afghanistan-kommittén är starkt kritisk till Invandrarverkets inställning.

– Rent generellt så har alla afghaner som tar sig hit mycket starka skäl för att få stanna, säger **Peter Hjukström**.

Den 28 augusti stängde pakistanska myndigheter samtliga fyra flyktinguniversitet i NWFP och 5.000 ungdomar, bland dem 1.000 flickor, tvingades ge upp sina studier. Pakistan ville bli av med flyktingarna och talibanerna ville tvinga dem att återvända hem...

### Mordvåg bland afghaner

Ungefär samtidigt inleddes mordvågen som i dag skakar afghanerna i Pakistan. Två FN-medarbetare mördades i Jalalabad, sex f d politiska ledare rönt samma öde i Peshawar. Några var mujahediner, andra medlemmar i Khalq och alla var moderata.

I Quetta var det mer av en vendetta och många menar att det är massakern i Mazar-i-Sharif i augusti som nu lett till att militanta shias tar ut sin blodiga hämnd.

En påstådd "konspiration" mot talibanerna som utlöste massarresteringar i Jalalabad har också nämnts som en tänkbar orsak till mordet på Hashim.

I en ledare i "Frontier Post" anklagas den pakistanska underrättelsetjänsten ISI för att ha känt till mordplanerna mot Hashim och flera andra men utan att stoppa dem. "Afghansk blod har blivit så billigt att ingen bryr sig längre", skrev tidningen.

**Bo Gunnarsson**

# Frisörer hotas av talibanerna

Att utöva frisersyrket eller låta raka sig i Afghanistan är förenat med stor risk att fångslad eller att bli pryglad offentligt.

Förbudet mot rakning och ansning av skägg infördes av de talibanska studenter som tog kontroll över Kabul i september 1996 och pådyvlade resten av befolkningen sin tolkning av islam.

Frisörerna arbetar hemma. Dit söker sig de få modiga som vill få skägget ansat samtidigt som de låter klippa håret.

Det är inte bara kvinnor som lider under talibanerna. Männen får också bära ett tungt ok, förklarar Zulmair Khan, som uppsökt en frisör för att få skägget putsat.

Talibanerna kan straffa mig, men mitt långa skägg gör livet outhärdligt när det inte blir ansat.

Frisören Zahir har placerat ut sin son som vakt för att hålla utkik efter soldater.

Talibanerna införde rakningsförbudet därför att profeten Muhammed enligt deras mening motsatte sig allt vad rakning hette.

Talibanerna har också en egen uppfattning om vad som är islamisk frisyr, berättar Zahir.

Håret ska inte hänga ned i pannan därför att det inte får vara i vägen när man ber och vid-



En taliban stoppar en cyklist utanför en moské i Kabul.

rör bönemattan med pannan. Mittbena är utmärkt och det ska vara kortklippt i nacken.

Omkring 1 000 talibaner, så kallade religiösa polismän, parullerullar gatorna, ofta utrustade med stälvarjär för att direkt kunna bestraffa syndare.

Frisörerna har beordrats att inte ens nudda skägget med en sax därför att det är "oislamiskt".

Flera frisörer har pryglats och tvingats slå igen sina salonger.

När talibanerna först kom till Kabul brukade de mest nitiska, religiösa polismännen kontrollera om männen hade härvaxt i armhålorna, vilket också är förbjudet. (AP)

## Revolver mot talibanstyret

AFGHANISTAN. Den afghanska oppositionen uppgav på torsdagen att revolver mot talibanstyret brutit ut i norra Afghanistan. Talibanerna erkände att de har haft problem i norr och har sänt förstärkningar dit.

På flera håll utkämpas de hårdaste striderna sedan talibanerna tog kontroll över de fem nordligaste provinserna i juli och augusti i år, sade en talesman för oppositionens ledare Ahmad Shah Massoud. Han uppgav att talibanerna förlorat 1 000 man under de senaste fem veckornas strider och att de egna förlusterna uppgick till 230 stupade eller sårade.

TT-AFP, Kabul

## Minst 21 döda i raketattack

AFGHANISTAN. Minst 21 människor dödades och 27 skadades när flera raketer slog ner i Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul på söndagsmorgonen. Enligt företrädare för talibanregimen var det soldater trogna mot Ahmad Shah Massoud som avfyrade raketerna.

En talesman för Massoud sade i den iranska staden Mashhad att raketanfallet var en vedergällning för talibanernas beskjutning av staden Taloan i norr i lördags, då 20 människor skall ha dödats eller skadats.

Massouds styrkor finns ungefär 2,5 mil norr om Kabul, där de försöker förhindra att talibanerna erövrar de få områden i norr som ännu är i de oppositionella styrkornas händer. Talibanerna kontrollerar 90 procent av landet. TT-DPA, Kabul

## Afghanistan

Usama bin Ladin frihet besöks. Den styrande talibanmilisen i Afghanistan har beskurit den terroristmanklagade saudiske miljonären Usama bin Ladin frihet. Usama bin Ladin fortsätter inte som tidigare kommunicera med omvärlden via exempelvis telefon eller radio.

TT-Reuters, Islamabad

DN 11/2-99

## Afghanistan

Dödssiffran ökar. Minst 50 människor omkom och 200 skadades i den kraftiga jordbävning som i torsdags kväll skakade Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul med omnejd, rapporterade den afghanska

talibanregimens radio på fredagen och väjade om internationell hjälp. Enligt radion inträffade de flesta dödsfallen i området Maidah Shahr tre mil väster om Kabul.

TT-Reuters, Kabul

## Usama bin Ladin rapporteras försvunnen

AFGHANISTAN. Saudiern Usama bin Ladin, som av USA anklagas för bombdåden mot USA:s ambassader i Kenya och Tanzania, har varit "försvunnen" sedan i fredags, och det är inte känt var han befinner sig. Det sade Tayeb Khan, talesman för talibanmilisen i Afghanistan, på lördagen.

Vi har just fått reda på att han saknas och vi vet inte om han fortfarande befinner sig i Afghanistan eller om han har lämnat landet. Men vi har inte tvingat honom att ge sig av, sade Tayeb Khan från Kandahar där bin Ladin tros ha befunnit sig under det senaste året.

Företrädare för talibanerna sade att Usama bin Ladin inte utsatts för några påtryckningar för att lämna Afghanistan. USA har begärt att få saudiern utlämnad och har utlovat en belöning på fem miljoner dollar - motsvarande drygt 39 miljoner kronor - till den som kan lämna uppgifter som leder till att bin Ladin kan gripas.

Den pakistanska nyhetsbyrån AIP rapporterade i onsdags att talibanerna förbjudit bin Ladin att ta emot gäster och att ha kontakter med omvärlden, samt att all hans kommunikationsutrustning, inklusive telefon och radio, har dragits in.

TT-AFP, Kabul

## Afghanistan

Fler döda. Dödssiffran efter torsdagens jordskalv i östra Afghanistan hade på lördagen stigit till minst 67, sade myndigheterna. Av dessa var tio barn som frusit ihjäl sedan de inte vågat gå tillbaka till sina skadade bostäder. Minst 210 människor skadades och över 1 000 är hemlösa.

TT-AFP, Ander

"Profeten Muhammed har befallt oss att bära skägg. Men många muslimer, ledare för islamiska stater inklusive Saudiarabien, åtlyder inte denna befallning."

Maulvi Shamsuddin, viceminister för de afghanska talibanernas religiösa polis.

DN 25/1-99

## Tusentals hemlösa efter skalv

KABUL Tusentals människor är hemlösa efter förra veckans jordbävning i Afghanistan. Internationella Röda korset och FN arbetar nu febrilt i den bistra kylan för att få fram mat, läkemedel, filter och plastpresenningar till området, sex mil söder om huvudstaden Kabul.

Enligt de styrande talibanernas radio döddes 100 människor i jordbävningen i torsdags, som uppmättes till 5,5 på Richterskalan. 500 ska ha skadats. **SV 16/2-99 (FLT-AP)**

## Moskva minns Kabulreträtt

**Moskva:** Hundratals ryska veteraner från kriget i Afghanistan tågade på måndagen genom centrala Moskva, exakt tio år efter det att de sista sovjetiska trupperna lämnade det centralasiatiska landet. Omkring 500 krigsveteraner gick från Pusjkintorget till Kreml, där de maktbävare satt som tvingades ut dem i det afghanska äventyret. Premiärminister Jevgenij Primakov och Kremls stabsschef Nikolaj Bordjuzja lade ned kransar vid Den okände soldatens grav. En rad andra ministrar och höga militärer deltog i ceremonin.

Michail Gorbatsjov, Sovjetunionens siste president och statschef vid tiden för uttåget ur Afghanistan, sade enligt nyhetsbyrån Interfax att de fortsatta konflikterna i världen, bland annat i Tjetjenien, visar att varken Ryssland eller resten av det internationella samfundet dragit några som helst lärdomar av det afghanska kriget. **TT-AFP SVD 16/2-99**

## Afghanistan DN 16/2

**Fångutväxling.** De stridande parterna i Afghanistan utväxlade under

veckoslutet 40 krigsfångar, uppger internationella Röda korset. Fångarna fördes med ett av Röda korsets flygplan från talibanskt territorium till oppositionskontrollerad mark, och vice versa. **AP, Kabul**

## Mystisk sjuka i Afghanistan

**Islamabad (TT-Reuters)**

En mystisk sjukdom har krävt över 350 människors liv i nordöstra Afghanistan och hotar att ta livet av flera hundra andra. Dödsfallen rapporterades från fyra distrikt i Badakhshan-provinsen vid gränsen mot Kina och Tadzjikistan, områden som kontrolleras av de motståndsstyrkor som bekämpar den styrande talibanmilisen i Afghanistan.

I Islamabad bekräftade FN samtidigt enligt AFP tidigare rapporter om att minst 30 000 människor är hemlösa i de båda afghanska provinserna Wardak och Logar efter förra veckans kraftiga jordbävning. **AP, Kabul**

## Afghanistan-insamling gav 4 820 kronor

Svenska Afghanistankommitténs julinsamling för rehabilitering av krigs- och jordbävningsskadade gav ett samlat resultat av 4 820 kronor. De insamlade medlen har som vanligt inbringats genom flygbladsutdelning och bössinsamling i Skövde och Mariestad, som är center för länsavdelningen.

Genomslaget för kampanjen på riksplanet blev rekordartat, över 700 000 kronor, som mer än väl täcker de beräknade kostnaderna för de planerade rehabiliteringscentren i södra och norra Afghanistan. **SVD 17/2-99**

## Afghanistan DN 17/2-99

**Händer högs av.** Tre afghanska män som dömts för stöld fick på fredagen sina högerhänder avhuggna. Samtidigt fick tre företrädare för den styrande talibanmilisen spöstraff för att ha tagit mutor. Det rapporterades talibanska källor i Kabul. **TT-Reuters, Kabul**

## Minst 350 döda i okänd farsot i Afghanistan 17/2

Över 350 människor har de senaste två veckorna avlidit i en hittills okänd farsot i norra Afghanistan nära gränsen mot Tadzjikistan, uppgav den afghanska ambassaden i Dusjanbe på tisdagen. Experter uppges inte utesluta att det rör sig om en koleraepidemi, men det finns inte kvalificerade läkare i det drabbade området som kan fastslå vilken sjukdom det är som grasserar. Dessutom är det i vilket fall som helst oerhört ont om medicin. **DUSJANBE (TT-DPA)**

## DN 16/2-99 Afghanistan

**Fångutväxling.** I Afghanistan har de styrande talibanerna och dess politiska motståndare utväxlat fångar. På lördagen fick elva fångar från vardera sidan återvända till de egna leden. De praktiska detaljerna kring utväxlingen ombesörjdes av Internationella rödakorskommittén, ICRC, som dock inte varit inblandad i de förhandlingar som föregick bytet. Enligt uppgift var flera av de frigivna sjuka. **TT-Reuters, Kabul**

## DN 11/3-99 FN ska åter sända personal till det av inbördeskrig härjade Afghanistan

**FN** ska åter sända personal till det av inbördeskrig härjade Afghanistan, uppger FN-tjänstemän. För sex månader sedan drog världsorganisationen tillbaka sina medarbetare sedan flera av dem mördats. Nu blir det en begränsad FN-representation i landet. **TT-AFP**

## "Afghansk apartheid mot kvinnor" SVD 13/3-99

**GENÈVE, TT-AFP**  
► Talibanregimen i Afghanistan har åstadkommit ett apartheidsystem för landets kvinnor, heter det i en FN-rapport.

Kvinnorna drabbas av intolerans och diskriminering, säger rapportens författare Abdelfattah Amor. De utsätts för detta system endast för att de är kvinnor.

Amor är FN:s särskilda rapportör om religiös ofördragssamhet.

Han drar parallellen mellan talibanernas Afghanistan och de vitas tidigare rasistregim i Sydafrika i en rapport till FN:s kommitté för mänskliga rättigheter, vilken inleder möte i Genève den 22 mars. Amor framhåller regler som förbjuder kvinnor i nästan alla arbeten och utbildningar i Afghanistan. Kvinnorna får inte heller resa tillsammans med män, som inte hör till deras närmaste släkt, och de måste bära kläder som täcker dem från topp till tå, när de är på offentliga platser.

Amor anklagade talibanerna för att vara mörkmän som i sin maktsträvan blandar religion och politik.

## Nytt möte om Afghanistan

**ASJCHABAD** De stridande parterna i Afghanistan uppgav på måndagen att de ska hålla ett nytt möte i april för att diskutera detaljerna i det preliminära fredsavtal som de slöt på söndagen.

Avtalet kom till stånd efter förhandlingar under FN-medling på neutral mark i Turkmenistans huvudstad Asjchabad. Turkmenistans president Saparmurad Nijazov tog på måndagen emot bägge delegationerna innan de reste hem.

Söndagens överenskommelse innebar att en koalitionsregering ska bildas mellan talibanerna, som behärskar nio tiondelar av landet, och oppositionsalliansen som leds av Ahmed Shah Massoud. En sådan regering skulle kunna innebära ett slut på det 20 år långa kriget i landet.

Om vi lyckas bilda en koalitionsregering kommer eldupphör automatiskt att inträda, sade en av förhandlarna till den ryska nyhetsbyrån Interfax. **SV 16/3-99 (FLT-AP)**



## Nya strider i Afghanistan <sup>DN 22/3-99</sup>

AFGHANISTAN. FN:s sändebud för Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, anlände på söndagen till huvudstaden Kabul.

Samtidigt intensifierades striderna mellan talibanerna och oppositionen, trots att båda sidor tidigare i veckan talade om ett genombrott i fredssamtalen.

Källor inom oppositionens styrkor sade på söndagen att strider fortfarande pågick i provinsen Bamiyan i centrala Afghanistan.

Oberoende källor uppgav att striderna i Bamiyan innebär att internationella biståndsorganisationer har tvingats skjuta upp sitt hjälparbete i provinsen.

Strider rapporterades också pågå i den centrala provinsen Parwan och i Jauzjan i norr.

Talibanerna anklagade motståndsstyrkorna för att ha återupptagit striderna och därmed avbrutit fredsprocessen. Fredssamtalen, som hölls i grannlandet Turkmenistan, avslutades för en vecka sedan.

FN-sändebudet ska under sitt besök träffa Mohammad Rabbani, den näst högste ledaren inom det ultraortodoxa islamistiska talibanstyret. **TT-AFP, Kabul**

## Nya strider i Afghanistan stoppar hjälparbetare <sup>SVB 22/3-99</sup>

KABUL, TT-REUTERS-AFP  
► FN:s sändebud för Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, anlände på söndagen till huvudstaden Kabul. Samtidigt intensifierades striderna mellan talibanerna och oppositionen, trots att båda sidor tidigare i veckan talade om ett genombrott i fredssamtalen.

Källor inom oppositionens styrkor sade på söndagen att strider fortfarande pågick i provinsen Bamiyan i centrala Afghanistan.

Talibanerna anklagade motståndsstyrkorna för att ha återupptagit striderna och därmed avbryta fredsprocessen. Fredssamtalen, som hölls i grannlandet Turkmenistan, avslutades för en vecka sedan.

### Nytt möte trots strider

Men datum för en ny förhandlingsomgång kan troligen fastställas trots striderna, sade Lakhdar Brahimi senare på dagen efter ett möte med den talibanska sidan. Han ansåg att

båda sidor visade god fredsvilja.

Oberoende källor uppgav att striderna i Bamiyan innebär att internationella biståndsorganisationer har tvingats skjuta upp sitt hjälparbete i provinsen. Strider rapporterades också pågå i den centrala provinsen Parwan och i Jauzjan i norr.

### Terrormisstänkt flyttar

Den misstänkte saudiske terroristen Usama bin Ladin som i förra månaden försvann från sitt starka fäste i Kandahar i Afghanistan bor nu i den östra delen av landet. Det rapporterade den brittiska veckotidningen Sunday Telegraph på söndagen.

Tidningen uppgav att bin Ladin enligt västerländska säkerhetsskällor flyttat sig mellan tre läger i närheten av staden Jalalabad, nära gränsen till Pakistan i ett område som kontrolleras av den styrande talibanmilisen.

## Bomber dödade femton afghaner <sup>28/4-99</sup>

AFGHANISTAN Femton människor dog när Afghanistans islamistiska talibanmilis sent i måndags och i går bombade områden som kontrolleras av den oppositionella Nordalliansen, enligt alliansens talesman Abdullah.

Bomberna träffade en marknad i staden Taloqan i nordvästra Afghanistan. **Metta (TT-AFP)**

### Afghanistan

**Fångutväxling.** I Afghanistan har de styrande talibanerna och dess politiska motståndare utväxlat fångar. På lördagen fick elva fångar från vardera sidan återvända till de egna leden. De praktiska detaljerna kring utväxlingen ombesörjdes av Internationella rödakorskommittén, ICRC, som dock inte varit inblandad i de förhandlingar som föregick bytet. Enligt uppgift var flera av de frigivna sjuka. **TT-Reuters, Kabul**

## Nya strider stör fredsavtal <sup>10/4-99 DN</sup>

AFGHANISTAN. En våldsam raket- och artilleriduell mellan talibansk militär och oppositionstrupper rasade på fredagsmorgonen norr om huvudstaden Kabul. Striderna riskerar att spräcka den bräckliga fredsöverenskommelse som ingicks mellan parterna i mars.

Talibanarmén anklagade oppositionen för att ha avfyrat den första raketen.

- Vi hade inget annat val än att försvara oss, förklarade den talibanske befälhavaren, som identifierade sig endast med namnet Habibullah.

Det var inte känt om striderna krävt några offer.

Habibullah betecknade den FN-medlade fredsöverenskommelsen som ett misslyckande. Han befarade också att striderna kommer att intensifieras i och med att vådet nu blivit bättre.

- Vi kan inte lita på oppositionen, det visar erfarenheterna, sade han. **AP, Kabul**

## Talibaner låter kvinnor jobba <sup>Metta 26/4-99</sup>

**De styrande talibanerna i Afghanistan har för första gången officiellt gett tillstånd till kvinnor att arbeta med en utländsk hjälporganisation.**

Det är ett stort steg framåt, kommenterade en delegat från organisationen Terre des hommes, Colin Tucker, i huvudstaden Kabul.

- Kvinnor kommer åter att arbeta i samhället. Det är beklagligt att det har tagit så lång tid.

Talibanmilisen införde stränga islamiska regler när den kom till makten i Kabul 1996.

Kvinnor fick inte arbeta eller gå i skolan, och deras möjligheter att få sjukvård begränsades.

Avtalet mellan det Schweizbaserade Terre des hommes och talibanerna innebär att 50 afghanskor får arbeta i ett program för bistånd till barn i Afghanistan.

Det har tagit ett och ett halvt år av förhandlingar för att uppnå överenskommelsen, som undertecknades av talibanernas hälsominister mulla Mohammad Abbas Akhund. Andra biståndsgrupper har försökt ingå liknande avtal. **(TT-AFP)**

## Nytt hopp i Afghanistan <sup>Arbetet 15/3-99</sup>

● För första gången på närmare tio år - och efter 20 års blodigt inbördeskrig - kommer nu riktigt positiva signaler från det hårt drabbade Afghanistan.

Talibanregimen och oppositionen har kommit överens om att upprätta en gemensam regering, utbyta krigsfångar och - kanske det allra viktigaste - att fortsätta de fredsförhandlingar som nu nått fram till ett hoppningsvärt delresultat.

Samtidigt ska det betonas att vägen till bestående fred i Afghanistan sannolikt fortfarande är mycket lång. De vapenvilor som tidigare ingåtts har bara hållits under mycket korta perioder och risken för ett bakslag är därmed uppenbar också nu.

I Svenska Afghanistankommittén ser man dock mer hoppfullt på denna uppgörelse än på de tidigare vapenvilorna - och man ser också en möjlighet till en uppmjukning i talibanernas extrema islamiska fundamentalism och den förmedlande behandlingen av kvinnorna i landet. Det är förvisso, mot bakgrund av de senaste årens händelser, svårt att dela den optimismen.

Men man kan ju alltid hoppas!

# Nytt julemøte med Midtun og Zaccori

I over åtte år har elevene på Midtun skole tatt vare på vennskapet med jevnaldrende på en skole i Zaccori i Afghanistan. På julaften får du se filmen om båndene mellom Midtun og Zaccori på NRK1.

Skolene Midtun og Skranevatnet i Fana har vennskapsskoler i Afghanistan. Gjennom Afghanistan-komiteen i Norge har Midtun i åtte år holdt kontakt med elevene ved Zaccori skole utenfor byen Ghazni. Hvert år arrangerer Midtun-elevene vårdag på skolen. Der selges elevarbeid, afghansk mat og det arrangeres utlodning. Inntektene fra denne dagen er mer på å drive skolen i det krigsherjede landet.

## Tegnet krig

– Det var kjempesorg å holde på dette arbeidet. Jeg skrev brev sammen Hamidullah, som er elev på den afghanske skolen. Dessuten sendte vi tegninger til hverandre. Tegningene fra barna i Afghanistan viste for det meste tanks og maskingevær, men de viste også slott og drømmer om en freidagere tilværelse, forteller Linn Elgan (12), tidligere Midtun-elev, som nå går på Hop ungdomsskole.

12-åringen er den norske hovedpersonen i filmen, som er laget av Jannicke Strønen med støtte fra Vestnorsk filmsenter. I filmen følger Strønen hvordan de to holder kontakten med hverandre gjennom brev og tegninger. Men det var ikke helt enkelt å lage film i landet.

– Da jeg laget filmen for to år siden hadde Taliban-bevegelsen kontroll over halve Afghanistan. I Ghazni var det roligere forhold, men det var skummelt å kjøre gjennom Afghanistan, forteller regissør Jannicke Strønen.

## Veit over kalde elver

Infrastrukturen i verdens 3. fattigste land har ikke blitt bedre av sovjetisk invasjon og borgerkrig. Ferden gikk fra Pakistan og inn i Afghanistan. Vernet er borti mot ikke-eksisterende og Strønen måtte ta seg over kjølige elveløper.

– Jeg måtte filme i kjøle og slør. Dessuten fikk jeg kun filme på skolen. Opptakene utenfor skolen måtte foregå med duk på kameraet, sier Strønen.

Per Hornfelt i Afghanistan-komiteen forteller at organisasjonens arbeid i Afghanistan først, selv med det nye taliban-regimet. Komiteen har arbeidet med å gi humanitær hjelp til det krigstrette folket siden 1986.

## Skolebygg fra Midtun

Til tross for sridigheter, forteller



**FILM PÅ JULAFTEN:** På julaften kan du se Jannicke Strønen (midten) film om vennskapet mellom Midtun skole og Zaccori skole i Afghanistan. Her er Per Hornfelt i Afghanistan-komiteen og hovedrolleinnnehaver Linn Elgan. (Foto: Ola Henning Målnes)

Hornfelt at også militære småkonger så nytten av at barna fikk undervisning. I Ghazni-distriktet er 80 prosent av befolkningen analfabeter.

– Midtun skole har bidratt med en fjerdedel av byggekostnadene til skolen i Zaccori. I åtte år har pengene fra Midtun sørget for driften av skolen, forteller Hornfelt.

– Men Taliban mener jo at jenter ikke trenger å gå på skole. Hvordan er situasjonen for jentene?

– 50 prosent av jenteskolene har blitt stengt. Taliban mener at jenter ikke trenger mer, enn tre år med grunnskole.

Men ellers går prosjektene våre med skoler og sykehus som vanlig. Taliban krever at vi skal godta lovene deres. Det går vi med på så lenge vi har kontroll over midlene, kan forsette prosjektene våre og gi kvinner utdanning, sier Hornfelt.

– Hvordan løser dere det når Taliban ikke vil at kvinner skal ha utdanning?

– Kvinnene får utdanning på en litt indirekte måte, gjennom kurs og helseper-

sonale og mor-barn-kunnskap. Dessuten har vi nylig utdannet 160 jordmødre. Det går greit så lenge det har støtte hos og skjer i

dialog med myndighetene, forteller Per Hornfelt i Afghanistan-komiteen i Norge.

Av Ola Henning Målnes

## Vennskap over grensene

KS 23/12-98

Gjennom åtte år har Midtun skole holdt kontakt med elevene ved Zaccori skole i Ghazni i Afghanistan. På julaften klokken 1645 viser NRK1 filmen om prosjektet.

Elevene ved de to skolene har utvekslet tegninger, billedbøker og brev siden begynnelsen av 90-tallet.

Kontakten har vært med på å fargelegge mange sider ved den daglige undervisningen ved Midtun skole.

For skolen i Ghazni har vennskapsbåndet til Bergen også økonomisk betydning. Hver vår har Midtun skole hatt en aksjon til inntekt for sine venner i sør. Her selges det elevarbeid, afghansk mat og lodd.

I filmen som sendes på NRK1 får vi møte både de norske og de afghanske elevene og deres tanker om hverandre. Spesielt får vi innblikk i forholdet mellom norske Linn Carin Elgan og afghanske Hamidullah.

I år har tre andre skoler i Bergen opprettet kontakt med Afghanistan. Både Sælen skole, Skarvatnet skole og Krohningen skole har knyttet vennskapsbånd til en jenteskole med 760 elever utenfor det Taliban-kontrollerte området.

# Solidaritet på skjermen julaften

♦ FILM KK

23/12-98

av Bernhard Stormyr

Julaften kommer filmen fra Midtun til Zaccori på NRK til å vise hvordan et solidaritetsprosjekt skaper kontakt mellom barn.

Midtun skole på vestlandet har siden 1985 holdt kontakt med skolen Zaccori i Afghanistan, og julaften kan tv-seere bli kjent med samarbeidet mellom disse skolene. I 1996 reiste produsent og regissør Lanneche Strønen til Afghanistan sammen med daværende rektor ved Midtun skole, Tove Kayser.

I filmen får man se to barn i hovedrollene, Linn Carina Elgan fra Midtun og Hamidullah fra Zaccori. Det er barna som får fortelle hva de tenker og mener, sier Tove Kayser. Oppfordringen fra filmakerne er at alle kan drive et slikt solidaritetsarbeid.

– Helt siden vi startet samarbeidet har vi arrangert vârdagen, som er en dag der vi har lotterier og an-

dre aktiviteter for å skaffe penger. Vi sender minst 16.000 kroner til Zaccori, og det er nok til å drive skolen, sier Kayser.

Ved Zaccori er det rundt 300 elever, men alle er gutter. Dette er et resultat av Taliban's konservative tolkning av Koranen, og Kayser ser dette som et problem. Men hun understreker at Taliban også blir oppfattet

positivt på landsbygda, for de avvæpnet landeveisrovere slik at folk fikk en tryggere tilværelse.

– Da vi var i Afghanistan forhandlet vi om jenteskoler, og Taliban gikk med på at det skulle bli skoler for jenter også. Det har kommet på plass, men ikke helt som vi trodde. Jenter får bare undervisning i Koranen i moskene.



Den afghanske hovedpersonen i filmen er Hamidullah, og han forteller om sine erfaringer med Zaccori skoles kontakt med den norske skolen Midtun.

Foto: Afghanistankomiteen

## Vennskap over grenser

Bergens Tidende 23/12-98

TV-film: I åtte år har elevene ved Midtun skole i Bergen bygget vennskap med elevene ved Zaccori skole i Afghanistan. Nå satser flere skoler på lignende opplegg.

– Elevene vet litt om hvordan det er å vokse opp i et land med krig. De vet også at det nytter å hjelpe og at hjelpen kommer fram, sier inspektør Jan Edgar Hjertnes ved Midtun skole til Bergens Tidende.

Søndag tar NRK Fjernsynet seerne med til skolen i Afghanistan. «Fra Midtun

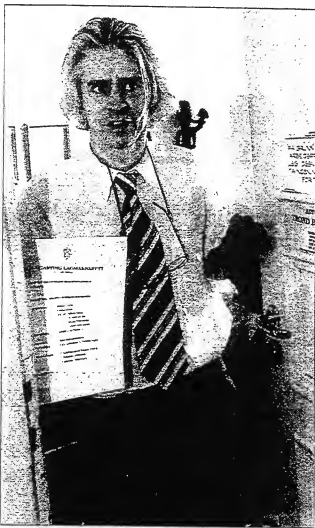
til Zaccori» heter filmen som sendes i reprise.

Hvert år går elever, lærere og foreldre sammen om en stor vârdag til inntekt for Skolen de har fått kontakt med via Afghanistankomiteen i Norge. I filmen følger vi blant annet eleven Linn Carin Elgans besøk på skolen.

– For elevene har dette vennskapet gitt meningsfull innsikt og blitt et praktisk solidaritetsarbeid. Jeg er imponert over deres entusiasme, sier Jan Edgar Hjertnes.

## Amnesti-spørsmål til justisministeren

Gholam-familiens advokat ber om avklaring



(Foto: Mimsy Møller)

Gholam-familiens advokat, Trond Romstad (bildet), etterlyser informasjon fra departementet om hva hans klienter skal foreta seg for å få innvilgt justisministerens juleamnesti.

17/1-99 Dagsavisen

av EVELYN DYB

Ingen av de 250 personene som fikk juleamnesti fra Aud-Inger Aure har fått oppholdstillatelse. Hva som skal skje videre er uklart, sier Gholam-familiens advokat.

Knappe to uker før julaften ga justisminister Aud-Inger Aure amnesti til 250 flyktninger fra det såkalte Quetta- og Laos-prosjektet. Det dreier seg om personer som hevder de er fra Afghanistan og Laos, mens norske myndigheter mener de er fra henholdsvis Pakistan og Thailand. Blant dem som fikk amnesti er Gholam-familien.

Men tidligere Gholam-familiens advokat Trond Romstad har det ikke skjedd noe etter at Aure sendte ut sitt amnesti. Romstad, som representerer i alt 20 av flyktningene, sendte i går et brev til Justisdepartementet med en rekke spørsmål om hva som vil skje videre.

IKKE OPPHOLDSTILLATELSE – Jeg har ikke fått noe informasjon fra departementet om hva mine klienter skal gjøre, sier Romstad spott og vet re uker etter at gløddemidlingen ble sendt ut fra regjeringsskontoret. Ingen av de 250 menneskene som omtales av amnestiet har fått oppholdstillatelse, presiserer han.

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## Afghanske flyktninger

BOK

ELISABETH EIDE

Der mørket leker med tiden

Gyldendal 19/1-99

I vel et år var Elisabeth Eide leder for kontoret til Den norske Afghanistankomiteen i Peshawar, grensebyen i den nordlige delen av Pakistan. Arbeidet hennes blant de afghanske flyktningene har gitt henne et inngående kjennskap til denne tragiske konflikten, og romanen «Der mørket leker med tiden» bærer preg av Eides innsikt i denne problematikken.

Livet i asyl er som oftest en trist affære, og de afghanske flyktningene i kirkeasyl i Norge eller på flukt fra myndighetenes lange arm har det alt annet enn godt. Det er Elisabeth Eides fortjeneste at hun tar opp dette temaet og lar oss få saken belyst fra flyktningenes ståsted. Det innebærer at «Der mørket leker med tiden» blir en roman som bidrar vesentlig til forståelsen av denne tragedien.

ALBERTH HENRIK MOHN



**TANKEVEKKER** ■ Elisabeth Eide har levert en viktig og velskrevet bok om flyktningskjebner med sin tredje roman. Den viser norsk asylpolitikk i praksis, mener BTs anmelder.

# På flukt i Norge

## bok/roman

Elisabeth Eide

*Der mørket leker med tiden*  
Gyldendal

sin tredje roman om journalisten Nina Marstein, har Elisabeth Eide levert en velskrevet og tankevekkende roman om norsk asylpolitikk i praksis, en praksis som blir stadig mer inhuman.

Det handler om en afghansk familie, Usman, Amina og sønnen Babur på flukt fra norske myndigheter etter å ha fått avslag på søknaden om politisk asyl. Et visittkort med Nina Marsteins adresse i Bergen, har Usman fått med seg på fluktruten fra Peshawar i Pakistan til «Narwi» – landet «der mørket leker med tiden». Slik blir Nina, i utgangspunktet motvillig, trukket inn i deres sak, en sak som fører til kirkeasyl i Korskirken, til flukt på Sotra, til en konfrontasjon med flyktnings situasjon, der og da – og en konfrontasjon med egen samvittighet: Hvor mye er sannhet, hvor mye er løgn, og hvor mye kan fortelles? Har man et ansvar for å hjelpe medmennsker på flukt, selv om man tviler på deres offisielle historie?

Samtidig venters Usmans søster, Khadija, i Kabul på en ektemann som

forsvant i krigen for 9 år siden. Hun driver en illegal skole for jenter i det hjemmebakeriet hun er tvunget til å livnære seg av etter at Talibanregimet tvang henne ut av læreryrket. Gjennom henne får vi et usminket bilde av hverdagen i Talibans Afghanistan – et av de verste og mest kvinneundertrykkende regimer i verden. Et land der kvinner steines til døde for utroskap. Der de piskes for et gløtt av ansiktet eller ankene, som så skjules under den fotside burkhaen. Et land der offentlige henrettelser, pisking og steining er en del av hverdagen.

Historiene ruller opp og flettes sammen gjennom de mange fortellerstemmene; Khadija i Kabul, Ismael, en venn av Usman og Khadija i Kabul, Usman som ikke kan fortelle den fulle og hele sannhet til noen, Amina som skjuler en stor sorg. Og ikke minst er det Ninas historie vi får høre. Hun er aksens begivenhetene dreier rundt. Samtidig får vi et bilde av en ensom kvinne midt i livet, ganske så desillusjonert, men fortsatt med evnen til å engasjere seg – og til å elske.

Miljøskildringen av Bergen i dag, og henvisningene til 70-tallets politisksjoner og politiske engasjement, virker autentiske. Det gjør også beskrivelsen av dagliglivet i Kabul. Eide kan sitt stoff. Samtidig evner hun å markere kulturforskjellene gjennom den enkeltes fortellerstemme og synsvinkel, det fungerer stilistisk og innholdsmessig. Som leser får man et nytt syn på Norge, sett gjennom disse fremmede øyne – og det på godt og vondt. Elisabeth Eide har en levende innsikt i kulturforskjellene og en evne til å formidle det skjønnlitterært.

Teksten ligger tett på kriminalromanens form. Historien, hendelsene og personene avdekkes gradvis, det driver fortellingen videre. Her mangler heller ikke spennende ytre handling i form av mistenkelige personer, satanister, og flukt på Sotra. Eide binder fortid og nåtid sammen – hendelsene i Telavåg under annen verdenskrig, og dagens krig i en helt annen verdensdel.

En tankevekkende og velskrevet roman om et emne som bør angå oss alle.

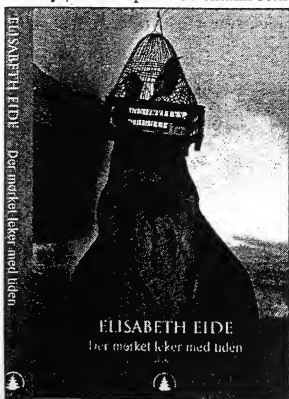
## Samlet front mot Taliban

Grupper som kjemper mot Taliban i den nordlige delen av Afghanistan har gått sammen under tidligere forsvarsminister Ahmad Shah Masoods ledelse. Gruppene har opprettet et øverste militære råd som skal finne ut hvordan områdene i nord kan erobres tilbake.

– Vi diskuterte årsaken til at vi mistet landområdene i fjor og behovet for en felles kommando, sa Masood.

Kampanjen mot Taliban-styrkene vil bli innledet så snart vinteren er over, antagelig i mars. Det øverste militære råd består av flere grupper, den iranske støttede Hezb-i-Wahdat, tidligere statsminister Gulbudin Hekmatyars Hezb-i-Islami, Masoods Jaamat-i-Islami og professor Sayyafs Ittehad-i-Islami. NTB/Reuters)

*Apptempsten  
25/1-99*



ANMELDT AV  
ANNE SCHÄFFER

# Hjelpen uteblir

21/1-99

De fleste internasjonale hjelpeorganisasjoner har trukket seg ut av Afghanistan. Tilbake sitter fortvilte afghanske samarbeidspartnere og føler seg ofret på kjønnspolitikkens alter.

Av Øystein Franck-Nielsen  
franck@vartland.no

**D**en britiske organisasjonen Save The Children er en av de store organisasjonene som trakk seg ut etter at Taliban-regimet røk uklar med hjelpeorganisasjonene i fjor. Taliban forlangte blant annet at alle organisasjonene skulle stenge sine kontorer og flytte inn i samme hus som en tidligere polyteknisk skole.

Det ble ikke akseptert av organisasjonene, og flere av dem trakk seg ut av landet. Bak konflikten lå åpenbart utenlandsk irritasjon over Talibans ekstreme religiøse krav, spesielt synet på kvinner. Kvinner i Afghanistan får ikke gå på skole og ikke ha arbeid utenom hjemmet. Senere har også FN trukket seg ut. Det henger sammen med de amerikanske angrepene på hovedkvarteret til Osama bin Laden. Da en FN-ansatt ble drept for en tid siden, var det dråpen som fikk begeret til å flyte over.

EU har kuttet ut all støtte til organisasjoner som arbeider i Kabul. Lengst har imidlertid britene gått. Der har regjeringen sagt at organisasjoner som igjen etablerer seg i Afghanistan vil miste sin statlige støtte.

Til avisen «The Independent» sier en afghansk journalist at organisasjonene har provosert Taliban mer enn nødvendig.

De oppførte seg som en familie uten far. Alle gikk til Taliban hver for seg, utfordret dem og forlangte både det ene og det andre, sier han.

The Independent beskriver den bygningen organisasjonene ble tilbudt som fullt brukbar, særlig tatt i betraktning at Kabul

er en sønderskutt by.

Organisasjonene forsøkte å presse Taliban-regimet. Det var det som førte til at kontorene ble stengt, og til slutt ble de fleste utvist.

Flukten fra Kabul har ført til at en rekke sykehus er blitt stående på bar bakke. Et eksempel er Indira Gandhis Minnehospital, Afghanistans eneste spesialsykehus for barn. Der kom den engelske organisasjonen Children in Crisis inn med brask og bram i fjor. Etter bare tre måneder, reiste engelskmennene hjem igjen. Resultatet er at sykehuset mangler det mest elementære av medisiner, utstyr og bemanning. Organisasjonen ledes av Sarah Ferguson, hertuginnen av York.

Sykehuset mangler alt, også olje til oppvarming. Legene kan ikke få utført operasjoner, og kan for eksempel ikke fjerne fremmedlegemer som granatsplinter fra barnas kropp.

## Mulig å samarbeide

Blant de tre-fire organisasjonene som er igjen i landet, er det internasjonale Røde Kors, Care og Kirkens Nødhjelp.

Marcus Dolder fra Røde Kors sier til The Independent at det er fullt mulig å samarbeide fornuftig med Taliban.

Men da må man sette seg ned på teppet og snakke med dem, sier han.

Patricia McPhillips fra den amerikanske organisasjonen Care, mener sikkerhetsrisikoen i Kabul er overdrevet.

Kirkens Nødhjelp har ikke trukket seg tilbake fra Afghanistan. Etter konflikten mellom hjelpeorganisasjonene og myndighetene i fjor, har organisasjonen fått tilbake sitt kontor, de har fått anledning av Taliban til å arbeide i landet, og til å reise fram og tilbake til Kabul.

Kirkens Nødhjelp er en av de store organisasjonene som driver hjelpearbeid i Afghanistan, og det meste av arbeidet gjøres av lokalt ansatte. Men også Kirkens Nødhjelp har måttet inngå kompromisser for å kunne fortsette arbeidet i landet.

Situasjonen er så normal som den kan bli, sier programansvarlig for Asia, Jorunn Kapstad i Kirkens Nødhjelp, til Vårt Land diplomatisk.

Prosjektene våre går etter

planen, med unntak av skolene. Vi har måttet gi opp undervisningen av jenter. Det viste seg å bli nokså vanskelig å fortsette, sier Kapstad.

## Får gjort det meste

Mange andre organisasjoner har valgt å trekke seg ut. Hvorfor har dere blitt?

Mange har sittet på gjerdet og ventet på signaler. Nå har også FN trukket seg ut. Spørsmålet er om FN skal være styrende for de andre organisasjonene i denne forbindelse. Vi har valgt å lytte til alle argumenter, og bestemt oss for å bli. Slik situasjonen er, får vi gjort det meste

av jobben vår. Kapstad sier at det er arbeidet i Kabul som er det vanskeligste.

Vi arbeider mest ute på landsbygda. Der er det noe lettere. Og vi vinner nok litt på at vi har arbeidet i landet så lenge, og at vi bruker afghanske medarbeidere. Men også i Kabul får vi arbeide.

Har dere måttet gi etter for viktige prinsipper?

Vi har måttet bøye av når det gjelder utdanning for jentene. I stedet satser vi mer på helsearbeid, spesielt blant kvinner. Her gjelder det å snu seg og være litt kreative innenfor de rammene som er gitt. Dessuten tror vi at

det er viktig å gi guttene utdanning. De som ikke har skolegang, er verst i synet på kvinner.

Men å drive helsearbeid blant kvinner krever kreative helsearbeidere. Hvordan går det?

Vi har hele tiden hatt kvinner i staben. De reiser rundt sammen med sine menn og brødre. Vi har hatt episoder der de er blitt stanset og trukket ut av bilen, men det ordnet seg da det viste seg at det var deres egen mann de var ute med. Vi opplever stadig diskriminering av den typen.

Jorunn Kapstad mener det er viktig å være i landet.

Vi vil være så lenge vi kan være til hjelp for mennesker som ønsker seg noe annet. Så langt har vi også respekt hos Taliban. Jeg mener og tror at folket er fortvilet over det lederskapet det har nå. Taliban har liten rot i landsbyene og i tradisjonen, men i en ekstrem religiøs leder som kom til Quetta i Pakistan og opprettet skoler. Men de knytter det de gjør så sterkt opp til Allahs vilje. Og folk i landsbyene er ikke vant til å opponere mot Allah. Og det er nok ikke alltid så iett for dem å se forskjellen heller.

Jeg tror Taliban har sin begrensede tid. Men det kan likevel komme til å vare altfor lenge, og alternativet er splittelse, sier Kapstad.

## Respekterer mandatet

Utenlandssjef Magne Barth i Norges Røde Kors sier til Vårt Land at organisasjonen har gått klar av den konflikten de andre hjelpeorganisasjonene røk opp i i fjor sommer.

Røde Kors har en generell forståelse med myndighetene og de andre partene i landet om hva

som er vår oppgave og mandat. Så lenge respekten for vårt mandat er der, kan vi bli selv om andre trekker seg ut.

Det tragiske er at mange humanitære behov ikke blir dekket fordi andre organisasjoner har reist, og vi håper de kan gjenoppta sitt arbeid.

Barth mener det er en betydelig fordel for Røde Kors at de har en nasjonal Røde Halvmåne-organisasjon i landet, og at det internasjonale Røde Kors har arbeidet så lenge i landet.

# Afghankveld

Afghanistankomiteén arrangerte forleden afghansk aften på Skranevatnet skole. Det ble en i alle deler vellykket kveld for de fremmøtte rundt 40 deltakere.

Afghanistan-kvelden bød på blant annet foredrag av journalist og forfatter Elisabeth Eide, som selv har førstehåndskjennskap til Afghanistan og kvinnene der. Tema for kvelden var Afghanistan - kvinner og utdanning. Dessuten fikk alle fremmøtte omvisning på Skranevatnet skole, og kunne samtidig beundre Afghanistan-utstillingen som for anledningen var montert.

## Vennskapsskoler

Både Midtun, Krohnengen og Sælen skoler har vennskapsskoler på jenteskolene i Afghanistan, og har vært med på innsamlinger til skolene. Hele kroner 60.000 er samlet inn i løpet av 1998 og januar. Et flott resultat som lokal-komiteén takket hjertelig for.

På utstillingen var julegaver fra jentene på Girls High School

nummer 2. Her var både dikt, tegninger, takkebrev og broderier. Heldigvis inneholder tegningene i dag færre og færre tanks og maskingevær, og flere og flere motiv som blomster, dyr og landskaper.

## Litt fakta

Elisabeth Eides foredrag var svært interessant og direkte. Hun kunne fortelle at i 1978 var det på Kabul universitet 10 prosent kvinnelige professorer. I dagens Norge er det omtrent samme andel kvinnelige professorer på norske universiteter. Så forskjellen er kanskje ikke så stor som det ofte kan virke. Hennes foredrag ble underbygget av stemningsbilder, og egne opplevelser.

En afghansk venninne fortalte henne at hun reiste til Kabul (selvsagt med mannlig påbudt følge) og krevde å snakke med de ansvarlige blant Taliban for å fortelle sin mening om deres feilsiteringer fra Koranen om kvinner og utdanning. (Koranen gir både kvinner og menn rett til utdanning, noe som ikke alltid blir etterlevet.)

Av Nelly Kroksnes

## Afghansk eks-statsråd flyktning i Sørreisa

Folketallet i Sørreisa økte med en halv prosent da den tidligere afghanske helseminister med familie ankom som flyktninger.

OLE MAGNUS RAP

Tromsø

14 barn er ikke så mye for en voksen mann, sier familiefar Sayed Mo-hamad Nader Khuram (63) til Nordlys.

Khuram var tidlig på 90-tallet helseminister i to år, og visepresident i en kort periode. Da Taliban overtok makten i landet ble situasjonen uholdbar for familien, og de rømte til Pakistan. Der har de bodd i flykt-

ningeleir i ti måneder. Egentlig skulle familien komme til Norge tidligere, men måtte utsette den lange reisen fordi mor Hameira (46) først skulle føde familiens 14. barn.

Store barneskull er ikke uvanlig hos oss. En venn av meg har 18, med samme kone. Noen praktiserer fler-koneri, og kan da få enda flere, forklarer den tidligere helseministeren. Stort nok hus til familien var heller ikke problem. Like utenfor kommunesenteret har de fått en nyoppusset bolig med ni soverom til disposisjon.

Den eldste sønnen, Hamid (20), synes det er greit med kulde og snø, det er de vant med i hjemlandet. Men utkanten av Sørreisa blir lik-

som ikke det samme som million-byen Kabul. Han savner en by, og håper å få tatt seg en tur til Tromsø. Cricket er den store sporten i vår familie, forteller han. Skisport blir i Afghanistan betraktet som meget farlig.

Både foreldrene og barna begynner nå på norskkurs. Overfor Nordlys demonstrerer Hamid at han allerede kan to ord: «takk» og «høns».

Far Sayed Khuram understreker at familien allerede begynner å finne seg til rette i Sørreisa. Den tidligere ministeren uttrykker stor glede over den hjelp og beskyttelse han og hans familie får i Norge. Han er glad for at familien er samlet og trygg.

Alle i regjeringen måtte rømme

da Taliban kom. De er farlige folk. De dreper mange og er svært fundamentalistiske i religionen, sier Sayed Khuram til lokalavisen.

63-åringen og hans familie er sliten etter flukten, usikkerheten og den lange reisen. Han håper å få ro og hvile i Sørreisa. Når krefte kommer tilbake, vil han skrive bok om det afghanske folk og situasjonen i hjemlandet.

Aller helst håper han at Afghanistan igjen skal få et demokratisk styre. FN må hjelpe til. Det må settes inn et internasjonalt press mot Taliban. Likevel kan det ta år før problemet er løst, sier han.



# Danset for Afghanistan

Bergens Tidende 22/2. 1999

TEKST: RUNE VALDERHAUG  
FOTO: RUNE NIELSEN

De var riktig stolte, elevene på Krohnengen skole på Fjellsiden i går. Elevene har samlet inn 23.000 kroner til en skole i Afghanistan. I går formiddag var det høytidelig overrekkelse, samtidig som 1. klassingene danset for sine «søsterelever» i det fremmede landet.

I fjor hadde elevene på Krohnengen julemarked med åpne dører for søsken, foreldre og besteforeldre, som med

åpne lommebøker sørget for at det ble rift om både afghansk mat og gjensstandene elevene hadde laget.

De 23.000 kronene (!) som kom inn er øremerket til bruk ved en jenteskole i Nord-Afghanistan. I går formiddag var Gisela Kruse fra Afghanistan-komiteen på plass for å ta imot sjekken på nøyaktig 23.141 kroner. Dette er nok til å gi 100 jenter muligheten for ett års skolegang i det krigsherjede landet.

Samtidig tok hun imot både tegninger fra alle elevene på Krohnengen og skolens jubileumbok på vegne av den afghanske skolen. Krohnengen har på sin side fått fine tegninger tilbake, som synlige takk og tegn på at vennskapsbånd allerede er knyttet mellom landegrensene.

Gisela Kruse fortalte om skoledagen til vesle Latifa, som er en av dem som får glede av pengene fra Bergen.

## Afghanistans ukuelige bestemor

Bergens Tidende 22/2. 1999

**Gjev ikke opp:** FN har flykta og internasjonale hjelpeorganisasjonar er i unntakstilstand, men ei 72 år gammel kvinne lar seg ikke kua av Taliban.

TEKST: ASBJØRN KRISTOFFERSEN  
FOTO: ARNE NILSEN

Nancy Hatch Dupree blir kalla alle afghanarars bestemor. Denne heilga har ho sett mot i Afghanistankoni-teen i Noreg.

– Afghanarane gjev ikkje opp. Då kan ikkje eg gjera det heller. Når eg treng oppmuntning, går eg til mine afghanske vener, seier Nancy Hatch Dupree.

Det er mange andre som har gjeve opp. Hjelpeorganisasjonane og utanlandske intervensjonistar stod i kø då Afghanistan var okkupert av Sovjet. USA leika trollmannens læregut då dei sådde muslimsk opprør og hausta islamittisk terror. Pakistan-er kanskje i ferd med å læra same lek-sa gjennom støtta til Taliban.

Fråmande makter driv framleis sine spel i Afghanistan, men hjelpe-

arbeidet har torka ut. Religiøs fanatisme, folkemord, terror, narkotika-handel og innbyrdeskrig utan ende har skrent bort dei fleste. Afghans-tan er blitt sjåande ut som ei håplaus heimgenyr.

Den amerikanske sosialantropo-logen og historikaren Nancy Hatch Dupree budde i Afghanistan frå 1962 til den sovjetiske invasjonen i 1979. Sidan har ho budde i flyktning-byen Peshawar i Pakistan. Ho arbei-det som rådgjevar for FN og ein sam-ordningskomité for hjelpearbeidet i Afghanistan og er dagleg leiar av Afghanisk forsknings- og informa-sjonssenter i Peshawar. Nancy Hatch Dupree blir rekna som ein av dei fremste, internasjonale Afghanis-tan-kjenarane.

### Øydelagt land

Ho legg ikkje fingrane mellom når ho skildrar kortleis dei fanatiske isla-mittane i Taliban har øydelagt det afghanske samfunnet. Ikkje berre er landet og økonomien lagt i ruinar av krigshandlingar og samfunnsstruk-turane korrumperte av heroinhan-delen.

– Talibanarane kan knapt nok

lesa, landet mindre styra eit land. Det einaste som enno får landet til å hen-gja saman er byråkratiet som har overlevd alle styresett sidan kongens tid, seier ho.

Ho meiner det verste som no skjer er at samfunnets sosiale verdar er truga av Talibanans fanatisme: Lojali-tet og sannhald blir undergrave av spionering og rapportering. Respek-ten for dei eldre blir undergrave av at 12-14 år gamle gutar kan slå og skjella ut gamle menn fordi dei ikkje er korrekt kleddet eller har korrekt sklegg. Menns ære og kvinners dyd blir undergravd fordi dei ikkje leng-er er mogleg å forsyta og ta vare på familiane. Forti tusen kvinnelege tiggjarar på gatene i Kabul er ei uto-leig skam i dette strengt patriarkal-ske landet.

### Konferanse

Nancy Hatch Dupree er ein av inn-leiarane på konferansen som Afghanistan-komiteen i Noreg avvi-klar i Bergen denne heilga. Fleire internasjonalt kjende Afghanistan-eksperter er samla for å å gi eitt utsegn over hjelpearbeidet ved tuse-nårsskiftet. Gjennom mittet år har

Noreg ytt nesten halvannen miliard kroner til humanitær innsats i det krigsherja, fattige landet.

### Knuste voner

Alle afghanarars bestemor har gang på gang sett vonene om ei betre framtid bli knuste og landet bli trykt stadig lenger ned i elendig.

Ikkje desto mindre meiner ho det enno er mange kort å spela på for dei som ynskjer å hjelpa afghanarane til å gjenvinna samfunnets integritet.

– Det er aldri så gale som det ser ut for! seier ho. – Afghanarar er eit modig folk og samfunnet deira byg-gjer på grunnleggjande egalitære og humanitære verdar.

Tre fjerdedelar av folket bur utan-for Kabul, og Talibanans kontroll er mykje mindre på landsbygda enn i hovudstaden. Særleg i nord er det dessutan andre krefter som har makta. Nancy Hatch Dupree legg vekt på at Taliban ikkje er ein mono-litisk blokk.

– Alle er ikkje fanatikarar, seier ho. Det finst moderate krefter å spe-la på, og det finst mangel på saman-heng og konsekvens som kan utnyt-tast.

# KN tilbake i Kabul

Pragmatiske brudd med UD og FN's taliban-politikk

Alt i tidlig desember gjenåpnet Kirkens Ndhjelp sitt kontor i taliban-kontrollerte Kabul. Også den norske Afghanistankomiteen er på vei tilbake. Det skjer tross det norske utenriksdepartementets og FN-systemets oppfordring om at internasjonale NGO'er foreløpig ikke bør etablere seg i den afghanske hovedstaden.

• 900 HJELPER

Mangel på sikkerhet og behov for bedre koordinering av bistanden er begrunnelsen fra norsk UD og FN-systemet.

«Vår utgangspunkt er å hjelpe det afghanske folket. De er blant de fattigste i verden, har vært gjennom to tiår med krig og har det seineste året vært rammet av jordskjelv og flom. Derfor inntar vi en pragmatisk holdning, og har i det små startet opp igjen virksomheten også fra Kabul, sier Afghanistan-medarbeider Anders Tunstad i Kirkens Ndhjelp.

Foreløpig har ingen av KNs to internasjonalt ansatte vært tilbake i den afghanske hovedstaden, men planen er å gjøre en sonderingstre i begynnelsen av mars.

**Høyskole.** Ifølge Tunstad har organisasjonen gjenåpnet sitt kontor i sine gamle lokaler og ikke flyttet til den tekniske høyskolen, dit talibane ønsker å samle de utenlandske NGO'ene.

«Om vi vil gjøre det avhenger av flere ting, men foreløpig er det ikke aktuelt, siden det er mer snakk om en ruin enn om en bygning. Omfattende reparasjoner må til for at det skal bli brukbare kontorer her, sier han.

**Kontor i høyskole-ruin.** Generalsekretær i Afghanistankomiteen, Jacki Holmboe, representerte den andre av de to norske NGO'ene som driver bistand i forhold til afghanerne. Hun forteller at landsstyret i Afghanistankomiteen allerede i slutten av november i fjor gjorde vedtak om at man ville forholde seg pragmatisk til talibane.

Den avtalen vi nå har underrettet innholder at vi bare skal ha kontor og ikke bolig på den tekniske høyskolen. Fra starten vil vår tilstedeværelse også heller være symbolisk. På den andre siden er det svært vanskelig å arbeide inne i Afghanistan uten noen avtale med taliban-regjeringen, fortsetter Holmboe.

**Bare på landsbygd.** Anders Fänge er den svenske Afghanistankomiteens leder i Peshawar. Han er også en av de vestlige vestendene i forhold til hjelpearbeid for Afghanistan. Til Bistandsaktuell sier han at man kan drive hjelpearbeid i større deler av landet i direkte samarbeid med lokale ledere og dermed umgått taliban-regjeringen i Kabul. «Vår politikk er også å stille krav, for eksempel at det også skal være et skillehull til jenter, for vi ikke slike avtaler flytter vi heller vår virksomhet til en annen del av landet, tilføyer han.

**Evakuering.** Den 20. juni i fjor evakuerste alle de internasjonale hjelpe-



Norske frivillige organisasjoner er på vei tilbake til Kabul, tross talibanernes krav om sterkere kontroll av bistandsstrømmen.

FOTO: AMIR SHAH, SCAP/XX

arbeiderne Kabul, inkludert Kirkens Ndhjelp og Afghanistankomiteen. Bare Den internasjonale Røde Korskomiteen beholder utendringer i byen. FN-apparatet fortsetter sitt hjelpearbeid via lokalt ansatte.

Tidlig i august ble to lokalt FN-ansatte myrdet i Jalalabad, like over grensa fra Pakistan. Heller ikke i dette tilfellet viste taliban noen vilje til å finne de skyldige. En ytterlig forverring av sikkerheten for utendringer kom etter at USA i august bombet mål i Afghanistan som skulle være baser til den saudiarabiske terroristen Osama bin Laden.

**Norsk politikk.** Bistandsarbeidet i forhold til Afghanistan har lenge vært dårlig koordinert. De seinere år har det internasjonale samfunnet, inklusiv Norge, lagt ned mye arbeid i å bedre på dette, for å få til mindre overlapping og mer effektiv bistand.

«Koordineringen er også viktig av hensyn til sikkerhet og i forhold til å umgått talibane splitter på versamfunnet. Særlig gjelder dette i forhold til menneskerettigheter generelt og kvinners rolle spesielt, understreker statssekretær Lise Laund i Utenriksdepartementet.

Landet sier også at denne politikken er nøye diskutert med de norske NGO'ene. «Vi anbefaler dem heller ikke å opprette kontorer inne i lan-

det før FN har kommet fram til løsninger med talibane og for sikkerheten er avklart.

«På den andre siden kan vi ikke dirigere dem, de har deres rolle og vi har vår, på samme måte som også Røde Kors arbeider ut fra sitt mandat om nøytralitet og å hjelpe alle, sier statssekretæren.

**Riktig bruk viktigst.** Ifølge Lande er det ikke aktuelt å redusere overføringer fra Utenriksdepartementet til de norske organisasjoner selv om de skulle trappe opp tilstedeværelsen inne i landet.

«Det viktigste for oss i den sammenheng er at bistanden brukes riktig, særlig i forhold til de overordnede mål om å bedre menneskerettigheter og forholdene for kvinner, avslutter han.

I hovedsak har norsk humanitær bistand til Afghanistan vært gitt over Utenriksdepartementets nødhjelpsbevilling. For perioden 1980-1998 har det samlet blitt bevilget omlag 1,1 milliarder kroner. Halvparten av pengene har gått til FN-systemet og det internasjonale Røde Kors.

Den andre halvdelten har gått til norske frivillige organisasjoner siste årene har bevilgning ca 50 mill. kr årlig. Også i for 1999 er av denne størrelse.

## 100 skoleplasser sikret

BA  
9/12.-99  
Afghanistankomiteen i Bergen fikk i går en hyggelig og overraskende sjekk pålydende 23 143 kroner fra elevene på Krohningen Skole. Pengene er øremerket skoleplasser i Girl High School No. 2 i Nord-Afghanistan. Skolen ligger utenfor det krigsrammede Jalalabad-området. Prosjektleder for innsamlingen på Krohningen Skole, Jørgen Dahl, er

meget godt fornøyd med resultatet av juleinnsamlingen i desember. Han vet at pengene sikrer 100 elever skoleplass i et år.



EDVARD  
PETERSEN  
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tillegg ble Cisela Kramse fra Afghanistankomiteen i Norge overrakt tegninger, dikt og historieboken om Krohningen Skole gjennom 100 år.

skrevet av Margrethe Faye Lampe. Alt skal skule i skolen i ge med seg til skolen i Afghanistan. Prosjektleder Dahl kan ikke garantere at juleinnsamlingen vil bli øremerket først High School, men håper det blir en tradisjon på skolen å hjelpe vanskeligstilte barn i andre land.

# Taliban har brutt med bin Laden

En av USAs hovedfiender er blitt usams med sitt afghanske vertskap. Nå frister Osama bin Laden en isolert tilværelse i ødemarken – uten satellitt-telefon.

TIM WEINER/  
NEW YORK TIMES  
Washington

Osama bin Laden, mannen som USA anklager for terror i stor stil, har hatt et dramatisk oppgjør med sitt afghanske vertskap, som i tre år har holdt sin vernende hånd over ham. Det er tvilsomt om han heretter vil kunne operere med Afghanistan som base, sier amerikanske embedsmenn på høyt nivå.

Tre USA-representanter og to utsendinger fra Taliban, den væpnede religiøse bevegelsen som hersker over Afghanistan, kan fortelle om et heftig sammenstøt med påfølgende brudd. Skytevåpen skal ha vært i bruk da bin Ladens livvakter og en gruppe spesielt utnevnte Taliban-representanter kom i trottene på hverandre.

Etter sammenstøtet ble bin Laden forvist fra Kandahar, byen hvor han har hatt sitt hovedkvarter i Afghanistan. Sammen med koner og barn er han blitt ført til et avsidesliggende sted i fjellene og fratatt satellitt-telefoner og annet utstyr, fremgår det av beretninger til New York Times.

## Terror og høyteknologi

Takket være avansert telekommunikasjon har bin Laden kunnet planlegge og samordne terroristaksjoner sammen med sine radikale tilhengere verden rundt, slik amerikanerne ser det. De anklager ham for å ha ledet den blodige bombeterroren mot to amerikanske ambassader i Afrika sist august.

– Det er gnisninger mellom ham og Taliban, sier en av de ledende USA-representantene. – For første gang har de forsøkt å stagge ham og forsøkt å begrense mulighetene til kommunikasjon. Dette er et godt tegn.

Den landflyktige saudiaraberen er åpenbart ikke lenger velsett som gjest hos Taliban-regimet. Men det er stadig intet som tyder på at det vil inntreffe USAs krav om utlevering.

## Talibans dilemma

En prominent Taliban-representant, Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, fremholder åpent at bin Laden er blitt et problem for vertskapet:

– Hans tilstedeværelse er ikke til beste for det afghanske folk, men et dilemma for den afghanske ledelsen, sier han. Det vil ta seg dårlig ut om det islamske Taliban svikter en sann muslim.

Det er uklart hvor bin Laden befinner seg akkurat nå. Det eneste man vet er at han og hans overvåkere fra Taliban er på stadig flyttefot i den afghanske fjellheimen, sier USA-representantene.

Taliban har sendt en utsending til USA for å finne ut hvordan man kunne behandle bin Laden på en måte som USA kan være tilfreds med, men uten dermed å forråde en troende muslim. Taliban har også forespurt Saudi-Arabia om landet vil påta seg ansvaret for hans koner og barn, sier Taliban-representanten, som i likhet med de tre USA-representantene vil være anonym.

## Dramatisk oppgjør

Representantene for USA og Taliban gir nærmest likelydende versjoner av bruddet:

Det vakte raseri blant bin Ladens egne livvakter da et 10-talls Taliban-representanter gjorde det klart at de heretter ville overta jobben. Ifølge en av beretningene ble det avfyrt skuddsalver med automatvåpen. Tre dager senere ble bin Ladens livvakter formelt erstattet med medlemmer av Talibans etterretningstjeneste og utenriksdepartement. De fikk instruks om å påse at bin Laden ikke lenger fikk vise seg offentlig.

## Uten telefon

– Vår ledelse besluttet å kutte all hans kommunikasjon. Til og med hans telefon er blitt fratatt ham, sier Mujahid, som Taliban-regimet har utnevnt til sin faste representant ved FN.

– Han har fått vite at ingen utlending vil få tale med ham. Ti livvakter er skaffet til veie for ham. Livvaktene oppgave er å overvåke ham og påse at han ikke kommer i kontakt med noen utlending eller gjør bruk av noe kommunikasjonssystem i Afghanistan. Han er nå isolert.

USA har gjort mange forsøk på å overtale Taliban til å utlevere bin Laden. Kravet om utlevering ble gjentatt da viseutenriksminister Karl F. Inderfurth for en måned siden møtte Talibans utenriksminister, Jalil Akhund, i Pakistan. Taliban fastholder at en utlevering ikke kommer på tale da dette ville være uforenlig med islamsk lov og afghansk gjestevennskap.

## Hvordan vinne bistand?

Den radikale islamske bevegelsen har få venner i verden, men føler nå åpenbart et desperat behov for internasjonal anerkjennelse og økonomisk bistand. Det vil få lite av begge deler så lenge den holder

sin vernende hånd over ham.

Selv om gjensidig mistro van-skeliggjør et samarbeid, og det innen amerikansk etterretning er adskillig skepsis til om Taliban noen gang vil svikte bin Laden, er her minst tre løsninger som USA vil kunne godta, sies det på høyt nivå i Washington:

- Taliban kan i hemmelighet røpe bin Ladens tilholdssted i Afghanistan til andre lands etterretningsagenter.

- Taliban vil diskret kunne utlevere ham til et av nabolandene, der amerikanske etterretningsagenter eller politifolk vil kunne forsøke å pågripe ham.

- Taliban kan holde bin Laden under fast kontroll, isolert fra omverdenen, i håp om at han etter hvert vil svinne bort som kilde til anti-amerikansk terror.

Enkelte amerikanske representanter ser den siste løsningen som den beste, fordi man da ikke løper den risiko å gjøre bin Laden til martyr, noe som kunne gi støtet til nye angrep fra hans tilhengere. Andre mener han må pågripes, koste hva det vil.

Afghanistan er det tryggeste sted i verden for meg, uttalte bin Laden i fjor. Hvis dette ikke lenger stemmer, har han svært få alternativer, slik amerikanerne ser det. Somalia kan være en mulighet og Irak en annen, men det ville være svært vanskelig for ham å flytte til et annet land uten å bli oppdaget. Og ingen nasjon vil kunne gi ham den beskyttelse han hittil har nydt godt av.

Norsk enerett: Aftenposten

## NARKOJAKT med Taliban

# Flyktet med heroinfabrikk

**PESHAWAR (Dagbladet):** Pakistanske Bazgul (46) er blitt tvunget til å flytte sin lille mobile heroinfabrikk over til Afghanistan. Taliban-regimet har erklært hellig krig mot ham og andre narko-produsenter.

Bazgul er en av et utall småprodusenter av heroin som opererer i fjellområdene mellom Afghanistan og Pakistan.

Med de enkleste redskaper og et par medhjelpere kan han produsere et halvt tonn heroin i uka.

Det er svært enkelt, og man trenger ikke mye erfaring for å produsere heroin av høyeste kvalitet. Ustyrtet består av en morter, store kjele og en presse. Du trenger ikke mye plass heller, bare et lite rom. Begrensningene ligger i om kjelene er store nok, dessuten lukter det vondt, sier Bazgul, som har drevet sin lille heroinlab siden 1978.

## 150 fabrikker

Dagbladet møtte heroинprodusenten i Peshawar. Han ønsker å være anonym, av hensyn til sin egen sikkerhet. Selv bor han i et av de løvløse stammeområdene på den pakistanske siden av grensa.

Den siste tida har imidlertid problemene for narkoprodusenten blitt så store i Pakistan, at han har flyttet sin mobile heroinlab over grensa til Afghanistan. Han betaler skatt til Taliban.

– Bare i det området jeg holder til, er det i alle fall 150 små fabrikker, forteller han.

## Foraktet av familien

Men Bazgul tjener også godt på sin virksomhet. For var han bussjåfør, men på slutten av 70-tallet kom en europeer til området hvor Bazgul bohte. Han solgte billig heroin til lokalbefolkningen, slik at Bazgul og andre ble avhengige, og lærte dem å lage stoffet selv.

I ti år var Bazgul slave av heroinen. Nå har han kuttet ut stoffet, men fortsetter å framstille det.

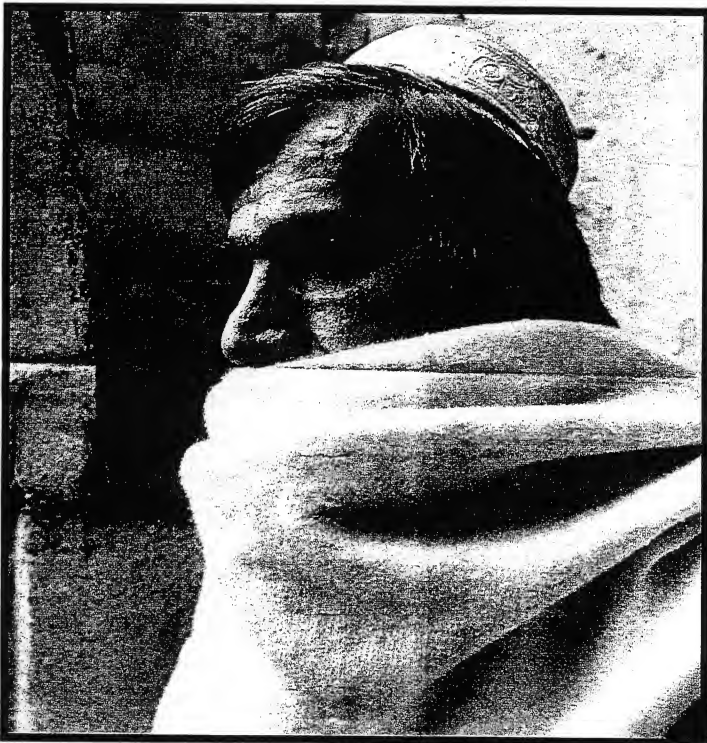
– Heroinmisbruk er en sykdom, en vond ting. Jeg liker ikke det jeg holder på med. Men hvordan kan jeg ellers tjene like godt? Jeg ville sluttet dersom jeg kunne tjene like mye på andre ting, men det er litt for seint å bli bussjåfør igjen. Dessuten er jeg bare produsent, jeg leverer ikke stoffet til folk.

Andre får ta ansvar, mener han.

## Tyske kjemikalier

Ingrediensene i heroинproduksjonen er lett tilgjengelige, alt er lokale varer med unntak av kjemikalier. Tyske kjemikalier som kommer fra Tyskland.

– For å lage et kilo heroin, trenger jeg seks kilo råopium, et kilo kjemikalier, et kilo sink og et kilo kalk. Dette koster jeg sammen, tørker det og lar det ligge tre dager. Da har jeg et kilo fin heroin, sier han.



**HEROINPRODUSENT:** – Kona og barna misliker det jeg gjør, og forbanner meg, sier Bazgul. Men takket være farens inntribende virksomhet kan sønnene ta høyere utdanning.

**JALALABAD (Dagbladet):** Taliban benekter at det er ytre press som har uløst regimets hellige krig mot narko-ondet.

– Det er en religiøs plikt, en forpliktelse i henhold til Koranen og profeten Muhammed. Narkotikaen edelgger mennesker både fysisk og åndelig, sier Abdul Hamid Akhundzada. Han er Talibans leder for bekjempelse av narkotika.

Bruk av rusmidler er strengt forbudt av Taliban, som kontrollerer cirka 80 prosent av Af-

ghanistan. Offisielt finnes det knapt narkotika-misbruk i disse områdene, men misbruk foregår i det skjulte, og sykehusene mottar stadig folk med narkoproblemer.

Gang på gang understreker Akhundzada at det er Taliban som på eget initiativ har innledet offensiven mot narkoproduksjonen, og at det er hensynet til landets egen befolkning som står i første rekke.

Likevel er det klart at Taliban-regimet i lang tid forgivev har søkt

internasjonal uenigheten. Men ikke minst fordi den terroristiske Osama bin Laden har fått opphold seg i landet, er forholdet til USA og en lang rekke andre land svært dårlig.

Dersom Taliban nå gjør et krafttak for å slå ned på narkotika-produksjonen, kan dette gjøre veien til internasjonal aksept langt enklere.

Kilder Dagbladet har snakket med i Pakistan, tror at Talibans hellige krig mot narkotikaen

kan være en del av en avtale med USA for å normalisere forbindelsene mellom Taliban og resten av verden.

Taliban tjener i dag selv penger på narkotika-produksjonen gjennom forskjellige skattlegginger og avgifter. Det franske instituttet OGD har anslått inntektene til 150 millioner kroner. Ingen Dagbladet har snakket med, tror imidlertid disse pengene er så viktige at det vil legge begrensninger på Talibans krig mot heroinen.



**- En religiøs plikt fra Koranen**



# Hellig krig mot heroinen

JALALABAD 22/2-99

(Dagbladet): Taliban-regimet i Afghanistan har erklært hellig krig mot narkotika-produksjon. Dagbladet var med da Taliban for første gang viste fram de ødelagte heroinfabrikkene.

Vi fikk se to heroinfabrikker i fjellene som var blitt ødelagt for en drøy uke siden. Ytterligere seks fabrikker var også blitt angrepet.

Dette er første gang myndighetene i Afghanistan slår til med hard hånd mot den omfattende narkoproduksjonen.

Dersom Taliban mener alvor med kampanjen, kan det innebære et alvorlig slag mot herointrafikken på verdensbasis.

Afghanistan er i dag en av verdens desidert største produsenter av opiumsvalmue og heroin. 80 prosent av all heroinen som brukes i Norge, har sitt utgangspunkt i det krigsherjede landet.

## Blir dømt

Lille julaften utstedte Taliban sine mektige leder, mulla Omar, et dekret hvor han beordret ødeleggelse av de hemmelige laboratoriene som forerleder opium til heroin.

Nå er ordren blitt iverksatt.

I den østlige Nagarhar-provinsen rundt byen Jalalabad er allerede 34 laboratorier ødelagt, og rundt 15 personer arrestert. De vil bli stilt for Taliban sine religiøse domstoler, og kan vente seg harde fengselsstraffer og store bøter.

Opiumsåkene ligger tett i tett, og i de ville fjellene mot grensa til Pakistan opererer de skjulte fabrikkene som foredler råopiumet til morfinbase og heroin.

Stoffet smugles gjerne over fjellene til de lovløse stammeområdene i Pakistan og videre ut til kysten eller gjennom de sentralasiatiske republikkene, før det havner på gata i Vesten.

## Tungt bevæpnet

Sammen med journalister fra Pakistan, ble Dagbladet tatt med fra Jalalabad til de ødelagte heroinfabrikkene cirka 80 kilometer unna. Etter et par timers kjø-

ring gjennom et goldt ørkenlandskap, kom vi fram til noen små steinhus ved foten av det mektige Banda-fjellet, ti timers gange fra grensa til Pakistan. I disse dramatiske fjellområdene gjemmer heroinprodusentene seg.

Av frykt for angrep fra lokale stammefolk eller narkotikabander ble vi eskortert av et femtital Taliban-soldater bevæpnet med bærbare panserraketter, maskingevær og kalasjnikov.

Sur røyklukt hang fortsatt igjen utenfor husene hvor narkotika og kjemikalier var blitt brent bare noen få dager tidligere. Sekker med opiumsavfall lå slengt rundt. Et hvitt pulver, trolig kalk, lå spredd utenfor og inne i husene. Bare i en av disse fabrikkene arbeidet mellom 70 og 100 mennesker.

I en liten steinbrakke kunne de produsere mellom 200 og 300 kilo heroin daglig.

Ifølge de arresterte arbeiderne, skal eierne av fabrikkene være Afridi-klanen i Pakistan.

## Vil forby dyrkingen

Talibans aksjoner innevarsler trolig noe nytt i bekjempelsen av narkotika-produksjonen. Ingen utenforstående Dagbladet har snakket med, tror at det bare er snakk om et propagandaframstøt.

- Dette er meget positivt. Jeg tror det dreier seg om begynnelsen på en kampanje som vil gjennomføres over hele Afghanistan. Dette er et gjennombrudd, sier lederen for FNs narkotika-program UNDCP i Nagarhar-provinsen, Mohammad Nasib.

Taliban vil på sikt forby dyrkingen av opiumsvalmue.

## Motivert av Islam

Den religiøse dimensjonen i Taliban sine narkotikabekjempelse må imidlertid ikke undervurderes. Dette islamistiske regimet styrer med utgangspunkt i Koranen og islamsk hellig lov, sharia.

Da vi var på vei tilbake fra de ødelagte heroinfabrikkene, stoppet plutselig kortesen. Taliban-soldatene vasket hendene og føttene i en fjellbekk, la fra seg maskingeværene og panserraketene og knelte på en liten grasslette for å be.

# Fire millioner misbrukere

PESHAWAR 28/2-99

(Dagbladet):

Ved et uttørket elveleie utenfor Peshawar og ved jernbanelinja midt i byen sitter de og røyker heroin. De er blant Pakistans fire millioner narkomane.

Misbruket har eksplodert de siste 20 åra, og Pakistan er i dag et av de landene i

verden som har størst narkop problemer. Trolig finnes over fire millioner misbrukere i Pakistan, et land med mellom 130 og 140 millioner innbyggere. Hele to millioner mennesker misbruker heroin.

Behandlingsmulighetene er få, og problemet ser ikke ut til å ha noen løsning.

Før Afghanistan-krigen i 1979 var heroin nesten ukjent i Pakistan. Men på

grunn av de lovløse tilstandene som krigen førte med seg, og mulighetene for å tjene store penger, begynte produksjonen.

## Transittland

Dette har rammet Pakistan hardt. Landet er et viktig transittland for heroin fra Afghanistan. Stoffet smugles over grensa og inn i stammeområdene hvor pakistanske myndigheter har liten eller ingen kontroll. Dette er et eldorado for illegal virksomhet. Her selges narkotikaen i basarene og fraktes videre til kysten.

Også på pakistansk side av grensa var det tidligere en omfattende dyrking av opium og produksjon av heroin, men dette er de siste par årene sterkt redusert. Produksjonen i Afghanistan pågår imidlertid med uforminsket styrke.

Mye går til eksport, men store mengder konsumeres i Pakistan.

## 92 tonn brukes årlig

Heroin av lav kvalitet får du kjøpt svært billig. Anslagsvis 92 tonn heroin brukes årlig i Pakistan.

Til nå har røyking av stoffet vært det vanlige. Men sprøytebruken er tiltakende, og man frykter en eksplosjon av hiv og aids i Pakistan dersom denne trenden fortsetter.

I en grotte ved et uttørket elveleie utenfor Peshawar sitter tre veteraner fra krigen i Afghanistan og røyker heroin. Hula er stinn av røyk.

- Framtida er den sikre død hvis vi ikke får hjelp, sier Faroh (37).

Han var tidligere offiser i den afghanske regjeringshæren. Faroh viser oss en fillete lapp. Det er ventesedelen på en behandlingsplass han sannsynligvis aldri vil få brukt.

## Røyker hele dagen

Faroh og kameratene Zalmay (31) og Aghagul (38) bruker hele dagen på heroinrøyking når de ikke tigger penger. Hjemme i flyktningeleiren har de alle familier og barn.

Afghanerne i Pakistan er ikke en gang med i den offisielle statistikken over misbrukerne. Men narkoproblerne blant flyktningene er store.

## Steinhaug

Like utenfor hula viser Aghagul fram en avlang haug med stein. Dette er graven til Salim, som bukket under for to uker siden. En lang rekke slike hauger ligger i området rundt.

Risikoen er stor for at også de tre krigskameratene vil få sin siste hvile under småstein og grus ved et elveleie utenfor Peshawar.

# Mor og barn er opiumsslaver

**PESHAWAR (Dagbladet):** Fortvilte Seeran Gul (30) har tatt med seg fem måneder gamle Hammda til behandlingssenteret for narkomane i flyktningleiren Khorasan utenfor Peshawar. Begge er de slaver av opium.

Mamma spiser opium, og Hammda har fått stoffet gjennom morsmelka. De er begge avhengige, og er to av mange som nå søker hjelp for å bli kvitt sitt narkoprosjekt. I bakgården til behandlingssenteret kryr det av narkomane barn og kvinner. Her får de sårt tiltrengt helsetilsyn og oppfølging for å bli kvitt avhengigheten.

## Opium medisin

Behandlingssenteret drives av den pakistanske organisasjonen Nejat, og kan tilby misbrukerne én månedens avvenning og ett års oppfølging sammen med familien.

I mangel på vanlige medikamenter, blir opium brukt som medisin blant disse flyktningene. Behand-

lingssenteret yter vanlige helsetjenester, slik at kvinnene og barna slipper å bruke opium mot sine lidelser.

## Kvinneproblem

I Khorasan bor over 1600 familier som har flyktet til Pakistan fra krigen i Afghanistan. De fleste tilhører folkegruppen turkmenerne. I denne leiren er opiumsmisbruket svært utbredt, særlig blant kvinnene. Turkmenerne er kjent for å være dyktige teppevevere. De eksklusive teppepene som havner på golvene hos rikfolk verden over, blir laget i enkle vevstoler på skitne leirgolv. Det er vanlig at barna deltar i produksjonen. Teppene er den viktigste inntektskilden for disse lutfattige menneskene.

## Døyer smertene

Arbeidet er hardt. For å holde ut slitet og døyve smertene, spiser kvinnene gjerne opium.

Barna får også opium smurt på leppene eller lagt i munnen slik at de skal være rolige når mamma arbeider. De yngste barna blir bedøvet ved at de får opium gjennom morsmelka og ved at opium blir smurt på brystvortene.

Opium blir tradisjonelt brukt som medisin. Resultatet blir avhengighet og nedbrytning av kroppen. For disse folkene er opiumsmisbruket ikke bare et fysisk problem, men også en skam. Og det er kvinnene og barna som er mest utsatt.

## Opium to ganger daglig

Bare fem minutters gange fra behandlingssenteret sitter Eid Gul (43) og ammer Jamila (1). På et lite rom i ei leirhytte bor to voksne og fem barn. I gårdsrommet utenfor ligger to vevstoler rett på leirjorda. Her vever Eid Gul sine vakre tepper.

Hun spiser opium to ganger daglig. Også hennes mann Sultan (55) og datteren Biag Sultan (6) er misbrukere. Bare de to siste barna har til nå unngått å bli slaver av det lindrende stoffet.

– Jeg begynte fordi jeg hadde vondt i hodet. Nå har jeg spist opium daglig i ti år. Det er et stort problem. Jeg skulle ønske jeg kunne slutte, og at også datteren min kunne bli kvitt problemet, forteller Eid Gul stille.

## Presses til å dyrke hvete

**NEHAG-DALEN (Dagbladet):** Myndighetene i Pakistan presser bønder i nordområdene til å kutte opiumsdyrkingen. For de fattige opiumsdyrkerne i Nehag-dalen er det et være eller ikke være.

– Vi er blitt lovet industri og andre tiltak som kompensasjon for at vi slutter med opiumsdyrking. Men vi har ikke fått noe. I verste fall blir vi nødt til å flytte til byene for å ta oss arbeid. Vi frykter også at kriminellen vil øke, sier Bashir Ahmad (26). Tidligere dyrket han og familien opium på de små åkerarealene som klaner seg fast i de bratte dalsidene.

I fjor ble opiumskatene ødelt av myndighetene. Denne sesongen satser Bashir og familien på hvete og andre produkter.

De fattige fjellbønderne tjener inntil opp til 20 ganger mer på opiumproduksjonen enn på andre produkter. Blir det ikke satt i gang annen virksomhet, truer bøndene med å gjenoppta opiumsproduksjonen. Og da er de villige til å forsvare seg med våpen i hånd.

## Fereskodede

Pakistan var tidligere en betydelig produsent av opium og heroin.

Men ikke minst etter internasjonalt press har myndighetene i landet slått ned på opiumsdyrkingen og jaget mange av heroinfabrikkerne over grensa til Afghanistan.

I de lovløse stammeområdene i fjellene mot Afgjanistan har opium blitt produsert i lang tid. Forsatt foregår produksjonen enkelte steder, men den blir mindre og mindre. Dette er områder hvor pakistanske myndigheter har liten kontroll. Samfunnene styres etter eldgamle klanneprioriteter med en streng æreskodeks. Blodhevn er vanlig, og alle har våpen.

Befolkningen i stammeområdene er svært skeptiske til de sentrale myndighetene. Tidligere har lokalbefolkningen ført regelrette kriger med den pakistanske hæren over blant annet retten til skog. Da myndighetene i fjor ødela opiumskatene og arresterte folk som ikke kjøpte seg, kom det også til sammensvølt.

## Avtale

I år har eldsterådet for stammene i distriktet hvor Nehag-dalen ligger inngått en avtale om ett års stans i opiumsproduksjonen.

Dette under forutsetning av at myndighetene foretar investeringer i området, og at folk sikres annet arbeid og andre inntektskilder. Forløpning har lite eller ingen ting skjedd for de rundt 400 000 berørte innbyggerne. I det korrupte Pakistan forsvinner gjerne pengene på veien før de når fram til dem som trenger dem. Holder ikke myndighetene ord overfor de stolte fjellfolkene, vil de møte motstand fra hver busk og hvert hus hvis de neste år med makt forsøker å hindre bøndene i å gjenoppta opiumsproduksjonen.

# Må forsørge sju søsken

7/3 - 99

**PESHAWAR (Dagbladet):** Roomal (14) er et offer for krig delvis finansiert med narkopenger. Nå trosser han sitt handikap og vil bli skomaker. Gutten forsørger hele familien.

For to år siden gikk Roomal sammen med en kamerat over et jorde i Kabul, Afghanistans krigsherjede hovedstad. Plutselig eksploderte en landmine. Roomal fikk venstrehånda revet av og splinter i hele kroppen. Kameraten slapp uskadd fra det hele.

Nå bor Roomal sammen med familien i flyktningleiren Nasar Bagh utenfor Peshawar i Pakistan. Faren er blitt sinnslidende som følge av krigstraumer og kan ikke sørge for familien.

**Som eldstemann blant åtte søsken, må Roomal ta ansvar. Han er nødt til å sikre familien inntekter, og går nå i skomakerlære.**

– Jeg forbanner dem som la ut minene. De har gjort alt i livet mitt vanskelig, sier den alvorlige, unge mannen.

Rundt 15 millioner landminer er blitt spredd rundt i Afghanistan gjennom krigens forskjellige faser.

**Narkotikapenger har vært med på å betale våpen og krigføring i Afghanistan.**

## Millioner i narkoskatt

Narkopenger blitt blodpenger som har forårsaket død og fordervelse. Da krigen i Afghanistan brøt løs for alvor i 1979, eksploderte også produksjonen av opium og heroin. De lovløse tilstandene gjorde det enkelt for narkoprodusentene.

Under den kalde krigen

krigsskadede flyktninger i Peshawar.

## Smiler aldri

Til tross for store funksjonshemninger, lærer de unge mennene å bli sveisere, blikkenslagere, snekkere, eller som Roomal, skomakere. I seks måneder foregår opplæringen, så vil Roomal begynne å jobbe.

– Nå vil jeg tjene penger til familien, sier han.

Ikke en eneste gang trekker Roomal på smilebåndet. Men når han demonstrerer hva han har lært, jobber han så svetten piper fram på panna. Stolt viser han hvordan han bruker munnen som erstatning for hånda han mistet.

strømmet pengene til kampen mot Sovjet-hæren i Afghanistan fra mange hold, ikke minst fra USA. Men krigen fortsatte etter at de sovjetiske styrkene trakk seg ut i 1989.

Kilder i FNs narkotikaprogram (UNDCP) som Dagbladet snakket med i Afghanistan og Pakistan, sier det er liten tvil om at enkelte av de lokale krigsherrene tjente gode penger på narkoproduksjonen. På den måten var narkopengene med på å forlenge krigføringen.

**Selv i dag tjener Taliban-militsen millioner av kroner på narkoproduksjon gjennom skatter og avgifter.**

Roomal og hans familie har som mange andre betalt dyrt for de lange årene med krig. Men Roomal er også heldig. Han har fått lærerplass på et senter for

# 11 tonn dop opp i røyk

7/3 - 99

**PESHAWAR (Dagbladet):** I de lovløse stammeområdene i Pakistan omsettes våpen og narkotika fritt. Men av og til blir det beslaglagt. Dagbladet var med på brenning av hasj, heroin og opium.

I sin lille våpenbod i en av basarene utenfor Peshawar, viser den bestefar-aktige selgeren fram de dødbringende redskapene som om det skulle vært hvilken som helst jernvare. En tyskprodusert kalashnikov koster 1200 kroner, litt billigere er det lokalt framstilte automatgeværet. En pumpehagle eller rifle får du for halve prisen.

**I naboboden selges feite klumper med svart hasj.**

I dette grenseområdet mot Afghanistan er det tilnærmet fri omsetning av narkotika.

Her har pakistanske myndigheter svært liten kontroll, og alle utlendinger som reiser inn må ha væpnet vakt.

## Politisk vold

Pakistan plages i dag av et stort antall etniske, religiøse og poli-

tiske konflikter som årlig fører til store tap av menneskeliv. Det er ingen problemer å skaffe våpen til disse gruppene gjennom illegale kanaler, gjerne med utgangspunkt i stammeområdene.

En del av våpentrafikken finansieres uten tvil av narkopengene. Narkobaronene opererer i stammeområdene og beskytter sin virksomhet med tungt skyts, til og med luftvernkanoner.

**I fjor var det rundt 1000 politiske drap i Karachi, og mye tyder på at politiske grupper i byen er involvert i narkotrafikken for å finansiere terrorvirksomheten.**

## Smuglernes paradis

Fra stammeområdene i Pakistan smugles dop og en rekke andre varer gjennom Pakistan til kysten hvor de sendes med skip til Europa eller andre deler av verden.

Dagbladet var til stede da den pakistanske spesialstyrken for narkobekjempelse brant 11 tonn hasj, nesten 300 kilo heroin og 130 kilo opium som var beslaglagt i nord. Dette er bare en brøkdel av hva som smugles i disse områdene.

**Bålbrenningen utenfor Peshawar var mer av symbolsk enn praktisk betydning.**

28/2-99  
**JALALABAD (Dagbladet):** Opiumsdyrkingen sikrer livsgrunnlaget for tusenvis av fattige afghanske bønder og lokalsamfunn. – Det er hardt å brødfø en familie på 25 mennesker. Vi er nødt til å dyrke opium. Ingen andre vekster gir oss like store inntekter, sier Afsar Khan (24).

Den unge bonden går på en liten åkerfleck blant de lysegrønne opiumsplantene. Nå er det tynning og lusing som er Afsars jobb, og han er allerede på etterskudd på grunn av kraftig regnvær den siste tida. Om

et par måneder er valmuen moden, og innhøstingen av råopium kan begynne. Dette er første steget i prosessen som fører fram til heroinen som selges for enorme summer i Vesten.

**80-90 prosent av heroinen som brukes i Europa og Norge har sitt opphav på åkrene til Afsar Khan og andre bønder i Afghanistan.**

### Storproduksjon

Afsars familie eier selv bare noen få åkerlapper. I tillegg leier de land fra andre. På de aller fleste jordene dyrker de opiumsplanter, og det gjør også mange av naboeene.

Afsar Khan holder til på landsbygda bare en snau times kjøring utenfor byen Jalalabad øst i Afghanistan. Dyrkingen av opiumsplanten foregår overalt i dette området. Bare i Nagarhar-provinsen rundt Jalalabad var det i fjor nesten 180 000 dekar

med opiumsplanter. I hele Afghanistan var produksjonen av råopium på over 3200 tonn, og Nagarhar er ett av de viktigste områdene for denne produksjonen. Krigsherjede Afghanistan er ett av verdens fattigste land, men i stedet for å dyrke matvarer, går nesten 640 000 dekar dyrket mark med til opium.

### Vil slutte

– Jeg skulle gjerne ha dyrket noe annet, men har ikke råd. Jeg vet det er galt og at opium skaper problemer for folk, sier Afsar Khan.

## Smuglet for familien

**PESHAWAR (Dagbladet):** Barn og ungdom utnyttes hensynsløst i narkotrafikken i Pakistan. Mange må sone lange fengselsstraffer.

Shalid Rasool Khan (18) fortalte familien at han var busskonduktør da han kom hjem med sårt tiltrengte penger. I virkeligheten smuglet han heroin. Nå bor han på ei skitten brakke i et overfylt fengsel fra forrige århundre.

Fangene må sove på golvet.

I en av brakkene er det over 180 fanger i ett rom.

Enkelte steder er det så overfylt at de må sove på skift. De sanitære forholdene er elendige.

– Du lærer ei lekse i dette fengselet, konstaterer han, og angreir bittert på det han har gjort.

– Jeg ble tatt med en halv kilo heroin. Tre ganger tidligere var det gått bra. For hver tur fikk jeg rundt 1200 kroner. Jeg beholdt 150 kroner selv og ga resten til familien,

forteller Shalid.

Hans far er gammel og syk og kan ikke arbeide. Shalid ville bidra til den fattige familiens økonomi, og gjennom narkosmuglingen kunne han tjene mange ganger så mye som på en vanlig jobb.

– Jeg skal aldri smugle mer. Når jeg kommer ut, skal jeg virkelig begynne som busskonduktør, lover Shalid.



**HEROINSMUGLER:** Shalid Rasool Khan (18) har sittet 2 1/2 år i varetekt i et overfylt fengsel i Peshawar etter å ha blitt tatt med 1/2 kilo heroin.

Likevel kan det hende at Afsar Khan om et par år dyrker løk eller hvete. I hans distrikt har det siden 1997 pågått et pilotprosjekt, hvor FN's narkotikaprogram (UNDCP) har gått inn for å få bondene til å dyrke andre vekster. I nært samarbeid med lokalbefolkningen, forsøker UNDCP å få slutt på

opiumsproduksjonen i løpet av neste år.

**Allerede har flere av Afsar Khans naboer lagt om sin virksomhet.**

– Vi gikk til det lokale eldsterådet og ba dem om en ønskeliste. De ville ha en kanal for å skaffe vann til jordene. Den graver vi nå opp, forteller lederen for UNDCP i Jalalabad, Mohammad Nasib.

### Mullaer

**Lokalbefolkningen i dette området har fått sykehus og andre fasiliteter som kompensasjon for at de slutter med opiumsproduksjonen. Agronomer hjelper bondene til å finne andre vekster.**

– Dessuten prøver vi å motivere bondene. Dette er svært tradisjonelle samfunn, og de lokale religiøse lederne – mullaene – forteller derfor folk at det er i strid med Koranen å dyrke opium. Opiumsvalmuen er i tillegg svært arbeidsintensiv, og bondene må ofte leie folk til å arbeide på åkrene. Vi forteller dem at de kan dyrke mer lettstelte vekster, og dermed kanskje ha andre jobber ved siden av. Fortjenesten kan bli like stor, selv om opiu-

men i seg selv har den høyeste prisen, forteller UNDCPs ekspert på utvikling av lokalsamfunn i Jalalabad, Mizan-ur-Rahman.

Dette prosjektet er unikt i Afghanistan. Dersom det er vellykket og det får internasjonal støtte, kan det være en framgangsmåte for å redusere opiumsproduksjonen også andre steder i landet.

### Lokale oppkjøpere

Men det er langt igjen før det blir noen nedgang i opiumsproduksjonen i Afghanistan.

**Snarere økte produksjonen av opium med 16 prosent i fjor,**

**og spredte seg til områdene som tidligere ikke drev med opiumsdyrking.**

Betalingen er god. Afsar Khan selger opium til lokale oppkjøpere, gjerne folk fra landsbyen. På grunn av den dårlige høsten sist sesong, har prisene steget betraktelig. Afsar sier han nå får rundt 900 kroner kiloen for tørr råopium, og det er mye penger.

De lokale oppkjøperne selger opiumen videre til heroinprodusentene på de illegale basarene i grenseområdene mellom Pakistan og Afghanistan. Det skal rundt ti kilo råopium til for å framstille én kilo heroin. Når man vet at en kilo heroin i Norge er verdt rundt en halv million kroner og salgsprisen på gata i Oslo er 1600 kroner grammet, sier det seg selv at det ikke er Afsar Khan og de afghanske bondene som sitter igjen med de store pengene.



OSAs hovedkvarter i Kandahar er under et angrep fra Taliban-militsen. Dermed åpnes døra på gløtt for en normalisering av forholdet mellom Taliban og det internasjonale samfunnet.

Dagbladet

Mandag 8. mars 1999



**HELLIGE KRIGERE:** Taliban-soldater ber fredagsbønnen i det fri etter at de for et par uker siden viste Dagbladet ødelagte heroinlaboratorier i Afghanistan. Den hellige krigen mot narkoproduksjonen kan være et ledd i forsøket på å vinne internasjonal anerkjennelse.

Foto: HENNING LILLEGÅRD

# Taliban flørter

I lengre tid har Osama bin Laden gjemt seg i Afghanistan under Taliban-regimets beskyttelse. Men nå er forholdet mellom bin Laden og Taliban ut til å ha kjølnet. Mye tyder på at Taliban har vendt ham ryggen og nå toer sine hender.

Et første signal om en forverring av forholdet kom da bin Laden skulle treffe Talibans leder, Mullah Omar, til festen etter fastmånedens ramadan. Bin Laden måtte vente i to timer før Mullah Omar dukket opp. På toppen av det hele ble bin Laden behandlet meget kjølig.

Dette var ikke mindre enn en blodig fornærmelse overfor en tidligere venn. Kort tid etter meldte Taliban at de hadde begrenset bin Ladens bevegelsesfrihet. Så kom rapportene om at han var forsvunnet, og en serie med rykter om at han var

dratt fra Afghanistan. Taliban har ikke bekreftet dette, men hevder at bin Laden ikke lenger befinner seg i områder som er under Talibans kontroll.

■ Alt dette skjedde etter at det hadde vært samtaler mellom Taliban-ledelsen og amerikanske toppdiplomater i Pakistan og samtidig med spekulasjoner om at USA på ny kunne komme til å angripe Afghanistan med krysserraketter. Rykteflommen omkring bin Laden ble av mange tolket som et forsøk på å forvirre amerikanerne i en tilspisset situasjon. Men nå tyder mer og mer på at det virkelig er et brudd mellom bin Laden og Taliban. I forrige uke skrev New York Times at det tidligere i år oppsto et regelrett slagsmål mellom Taliban-soldater og bin Ladens livvakter. Hvis disse opplysningene stemmer, kan det være starten på en vending i Talibans forhold til det internasjonale samfunnet, ikke minst til USA.

■ Ledelsen i Taliban har lenge sett på bin Laden som et problem og det største hinderet for en internasjonal anerkjennelse. Men det er mange grunner til at Taliban ikke har kunnet utovere bin Laden. For det første er han å betrakte som en gjest, og ifølge afghanernes strenge æreskodeks har han

derfor krav på beskyttelse. Dessuten er bin Laden en helt som var med i den hellige krigen mot de gudløse russerne. Han har sørget for viktige finansieringskilder til den afghanske motstandskampen, og har i tillegg skaffet penger til sosiale tiltak, blant annet hjelp til enker og foreldrelose barn. Han har ikke bare en høy stjerne blant mange afghanere, men er også populær i store deler av den muslimske verden. USAs demonisering av bin Laden som verdens terrorkonge har også medført at han er blitt et ikon for en voksende islamistisk bevegelse. Sympatien for bin Laden ble ikke mindre da USA i fjor sommer sendte krysserraketter for å drepe ham i Afghanistan. Også Taliban risikerer reaksjoner fra sine muslimske brødre dersom de for åpenlyst dolker bin Ladens ryggen.

■ Taliban kontrollerer i dag 90 prosent av Afghanistan og har brakt en form for fred til det krigsherjede landet. Bare i nord foregår fortsatt krigshandlinger, men fredssamtaler med den såkalte nordalliansen skal etter planen begynne denne uka i Turkmenistan. Talibans største ønske er å bli anerkjent som Afghanistans offi-

sielle myndigheter. Til nå har bare tre land gjort dette; men med bin Laden ute av bildet kan forholdet til omverdenen lettere normaliseres. Et annet tegn på Talibans imøtekommenhet er at de nå har erklært hellig krig mot den største heroinproduksjonen i landet. Dagbladet var for et par uker siden med da Taliban-militsen for første gang viste fram ødelagte heroinfabrikker i de utilgjengelige fjellområdene på grensa til Pakistan. Dersom Taliban mener alvor med narkokrigen, tilfredsstiller de også Vestens ønske om at produsentlandene selv tar opp kampen mot narkotikaen.

■ Samtidig er det klart at Taliban fortsatt er et fanatisk regime som både er brutalt og undertrykkende. Jenter får ikke skolegang, kvinner må være to talt tildekket og får ikke arbeide. Menn må ha kort hår og langt skjegg. Listen over forbudte ting er lang. Nylig ble en rekke menn i Kabul angrepet av Taliban-soldater fordi de gikk med skinnjakker. Jakke-ene skulle angivelig være tegn på vestlig dekadase. Likevel kommer det nå altså signaler som tyder på at Taliban ønsker en forsiktig oppmyking av sine forbindelser med omverdenen.



JOHANNES W. LOVHAUG

**SIDE 2**

# Taliban felles fiende

USA, Russland og Kina har omsider funnet fram til et utenrikspolitisk spørsmål, der alle tre er på linje: Taliban er blitt deres felles fiende.

Riktig nok er bakgrunnen ulik for de tre stormaktene misnøye med det grovt kvinneundertrykkende islamistregimet i Afghanistan.

Enda likestilling mellom kjønne er sentral i kommunistisk ideologi, er kvinnefrigjøring fortsatt lavt prioritert hos både russerne og kineserne.

USA er den eneste stormakten som forsøker å presse Taliban til ikke å stenge kvinnene ute fra skolegang og arbeid utenfor hjemmet. Imidlertid er livsviktig for alle enkene etter 20 års krig.



Jan Gritfensen

les de inn i provinsen Xinjiang (Singkiang) og agiterer for løsrivelse - akkompagnert av bombeaksjoner.

Provinsen var dominert av lykisktalende folkeslag (uighurer og kasakher) og hadde utstrakt selvstyre og religionsfrihet frem til de kinesiske rodegardistenes «kulturrevolusjon» 1966-76.

Da ble alle moskeene stengt og muslimene forfulgt og omgjort til minoritet ved hjelp av tvangsdrikkert innvandring av kinesere.

Metoden er den samme som kineserne har benyttet overfor de buddhistiske tibetanerne. Beijing er nå enn mer bekymret for uto i Xinjiang enn i Tibet.

## Presser Taliban

Men det er USA som legger mest aktivt press på Taliban-regimet for tiden. Også dette er ironisk, fordi USA opprinnelig støttet Taliban gjennom Pakistan.

Da Taliban i 1995 innledet sin utrolig raske erobring av det borgerkrigssherjede Afghanistan, trodde de Pakistan og USA å situasjonen kunne bli stabil nok for legging av oljeledninger fra Sentral-Asia og sørover gjennom Afghanistan og Pakistan.

## Dyrker Bin Laden

Det ville gi Vesten best adgang til Sentral-Asias enorme oljereserver. Men undertrykkende regimer både i Afghanistan og Pakistan har sveket

ket USAs tro på prosjektet.

Desuten er jakten på den globale terroristen Osama Bin Laden gitt topprioritet hos amerikanerne. De anser ham som hovedansvarlig for terrorbombene mot USA-ambassadene i Kenya og Tanzania i fjor, pluss flere tidligere terroraksjoner. Bin Laden har sitt hovedkvarter i Afghanistan. Med løfte om å anerkjenne Taliban-regimet forsøker USA å lokke Taliban til å utvise ham.

USA truer også med nye rakettangrep mot Bin Ladens baser, enda flørteis forsøk på straff ved hjelp av raketter ikke ga USA noen gevinst.

## Dyrker Bin Laden

Tvert imot har USA-rakettene styrket Bin Ladens heltestatus blant islamistene i en rekke land, medregnet USAs gamle forbundsfelle Pakistan.

Det er grunn til at Taliban nøler med å utvise Bin Laden, enda amerikansk anerkjennelse ville føre til at en rekke land ville følge etter. Foreløpig er Taliban-regimet blitt anerkjent av bare Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia og De forente arabiske emirater.

I Taliban skal det også finnes en litt mindre reaksjonær fløy, som insisterer på humanitær hjelp utenfra. FN innstilte sin virksomhet i Afghanistan i august i fjor, både på grunn av manglende trygghet for hjelpepersonell og i protest mot kvinneundertrykkelsen.

Det ryktes at Bin Laden nå har forlatt Afghanistan, fordi Taliban innskrenket hans operasjonsfrihet. Men det kan være bare en bløff for å bildegyre USA.

# Håp i Afghanistan etter 20 års krig

16/2 - 99  
Afghanistans krigførende parter ble i går enige om en avtale som kan bane vei for fred etter 20 års krig. Men i hovedstaden Kabul mottas nyheten med skepsis.

AV CARSTEN THOMASSEN

- Folk i Afghanistan tørster etter fred som en mann i ørkenen tørster etter vann. Men vi vet ikke, sier butikkeieren Mono Gul i Kabul til AP.

Til tross for det oppsiktsvekkende gjen-nombruddet i fredsfor-handlingene i går, gjen-sår en rekke vanskelige spørsmål.

Ifølge meldingene har Taliban-regimet i Afghanistan gått med

på å dele regjeringsmakten med opposisjonsalliansen. Men det er fortsatt uklart hvordan makten skal deles og om alle de ulike fraksjonene i opposisjonsalliansen vil legge ned våpnene.

Taliban kontrollerer 90 prosent av Afghanistan, mens opposisjonsalliansen fortsatt holder 10 prosent nord i landet.

## Våpenhvile

Taliban-regimet møtte sine motparter i Turkmenistans hovedstad Asgabat. Talibanens for-handlingsleder Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil sa at avtalen om en felles regjering automatisk vil føre til en permanent våpenhvile.

Også i februar møttes

## Mindre spent

Fredsavtalen kan redusere den regionale spenningen. Iran har lenge støttet opposisjonen under ledelse av tidligere forsvarsmis-tar Ahmed Shah Massoud. Pakistan og Saudi-Arabia har støttet det strengt religiøse Taliban-regimet.

Flere hundre tusen afghanske flyktninger befinner seg i Iran og store iranske styrker er utplassert på grensa mot Afghanistan.

## Tyver terrorister

Kina har siden i høst beskyldt Taliban for å trene terrorister i opptil 20 leirer i Afghanistan. Herfra smug-

# Positivt i Afghanistan

## debatt

Av Per Hornfelt, styreleder i Afghanistan-ankomiteen i Norge 1913-99

*Bergens Tidende*  
**F**orhandlingene mellom de to krigforende partene i Afghanistan (Den Nordlige Alliansen og Taliban-militsen), som foreløpig ble avsluttet 14. mars, må betegnes som oppsiktsvekkende positive. Det som til nå er gledelig å feste seg ved, ut fra de korte meldingene som er tilgjengelige, er at Taliban-militsen offisielt uttrykker et ønske om forhandlinger. Taliban har i snart 5 år avvist alle utspill om forhandlinger, både fra FN og Den Nordlige Alliansen. Så sent som for en uke siden avviste Wakil Ahmed Mutawahil et forslag fra FN om å dele makten i en bredt sammensatt regjering, ved å vise til at Talibans sammensetning allerede hadde den nødvendige bredden.

At det i tillegg nå er oppnådd enighet mellom partene om å dele makten i både de lovgivende, regjerende og rettslige institusjonene i en fremtidig statsstruktur, er også oppsiktsvekkende. Det er først og fremst det faktum at Taliban har forpliktet seg til videre forhandlinger og en maktdeling, som gir håp til disse forhandlingene.

Det er velkjent at begge partene gjennom vinteren har drevet omfattende militære forberedelser. Om vi senere får en militær våroffensiv, vil søndagens forhandlingsutgangspunkt isolere Taliban ytterligere. Dette vil også få konsekvenser for Pakistan, som til nå har vært militsens viktigste støttespiller.

Hvorvidt søndagens resultat i Ashghabad er levedyktig, henger nøye sammen med hvor hardt partene er presset og om Pakistan for alvor har begynt å spille en reell konstruktiv rolle i Afghanistan.

# Krigens skjulte ofre

2/5-99

Da Talibanmilitsen tok kontroll over Kabul i september 1996 ble 37 000 kvinner kastet ut fra arbeidsplassene sine. Kvinnene og deres barn er blitt den nye gruppen ofre i Afghanistans glemte krig.

- Afghanerne føler seg glemt av verden. De har heller ikke noe politisk system å kjempe for endringer i, sier prosjektleder Jorunn Kapstad i Kirkens Nødhjelp.

## UTMAGRET LAND

Det er over 20 år siden marettet startet. Først med en 10 årig sovjetisk okkupasjon, og landets indre krig som nå har vart like lenge. Et land som før krigen var selvforsynt med mat, og som hadde en høyere prosentandel kvinner i universitetstillinger enn Norge, er redusert til et utmagret land.

For kvinner i storbyer som Kabul er situasjonen blitt verre enn noengang etter at Talibanmilitsen overtok kontrollen av byene. Kvinnene ble gjort helt usynlige. De ble kastet ut av arbeidet og inn i hjemmene.

Bøgger en kvinne seg utendørs i dagens Kabul må hun gå helt tildেকে av buirkaen.

- Taliban-regimet tolerer heller ikke at en kvinnes sko, for eksempel klirrer når de går, sier Jorunn Kapstad.

For tusener av kvinner og barn er situasjonen

helt desperat. Mange kvinner mistet sin mann i krigen, og er nå enlosværgere for sine barn. Forsørgere som nektes å jobbe.

- For enslige forsørgere uten en storfamilie å støtte seg til er situasjonen virkelig ille. Prostitusjon er eneste mulighet for å skaffe penger til mat, og det er det dødsstraff for, sier Jorunn Kapstad.

For å redde barna sine har mange kvinner vært nødt til å sende dem fra seg. Gjent under buirkaen har de gått til nærmeste barnehus med barna, og nektet for at de var sine.

## GUDS SENDEBUD

Det er under dekke av å være Guds sendebud Talibanmilitsen har klart å få kontroll over store deler av Afghanistan. For folk flest på landsbygdedene har regimet hverken tillert eller fratatt dem noe.

Folket har sin jordlapp, og klarer ved hjelp av den å livberge seg på et vis. Med mangel på utdanning har folket vart et lett bytte for Taliban som ynder å fremstå som Guds sendebud.

- Den beste måten å kneble et folk på er å holde

dem uvitende, og selv fremstå med en autoritet knyttet til religion. Da er det Gud folk opponerer mot, sier Kapstad.

## FLERE TIGGERE

Styreleder Per Hornfelt i Den norske Afghanistankomiteen sier at antall tiggere har økt drastisk etter at Taliban tok over Kabul.

- Jeg opplevde å komme til Kabul og straks bli omringet av 30 ungdommer som tigget. Blant ligge var det også fem-seks kvinner, og de prøvde panisk å komme seg inn i bilen vår. Før var det aldri kvinner som tigget i Afghanistan, sier Hornfelt.

Men storbykvinnene og deres situasjon gir bare et av bildene fra dagens Afghanistan. Selv om nye er håpløst har folk i Afghanistan bevisst en enorm styrke og evne til å overleve, og til å gjøre noe selv ut fra lokale forhold. Folket i Afghanistan har heller aldri forventet mye hjelp fra utenverden.

- På grunn av folkets egeninnsats nytter det å hjelpe, selv med enkle midler, sier Per Hornfelt.

# Ti år med afghansk blod

kronikk

BERGENS TIDENDE · SØNDAG 28. MARS 1999

Ti år er gått siden general Boris Gromov som den siste soldat fra de sovjetiske okkupasjonsstyrkene forlot Afghanistan. Dette skjedde etter at FN gav Gorbatsjov og hans glasnostpolitikk en åpning for «ærbart retrett» fra landet. Afghanernes håp om frihet ble raskt revet vekk. I borgerkrigen som fulgte, posisjonerte nabolandene seg gjennom de forskjellige gerilja-grupper og eksilpartier i kampen om kontroll i regionen.

Krigen i det tiåret som ligger bak oss er blitt betalt med afghansk blod. Sivilebefolkningen snur kappen etter vinden – det som teller er å overleve. Noen utpreget entusiasme for den ene eller andre av feltherrene er vanskelig å spore. Det er kampen for det daglige måltid som er blitt befolkningens hverdag, i en situasjon som mer og mer fortegner som en humaniter katastrofe.

Da Taliban-militsen – som i dag dominerer Afghanistan – så dagens lys på den afghanske krigsarena høsten 1994, møtte de medgang. Taliban kastet vekk de korrupte småkonger som hadde grodd fram under President B. Rabbanis periode. Det ble trygt å ferdes og det var mulig å komme seg fra sted til sted, uten å betale enorme skatter til de ulike småkongene. Medgangen Taliban-militsen møtte var i sør, i områder som i hovedsak er dominert av pasthunere, som Taliban selv. Den reelle motstand møtte militsen da de nådde Kabuls forsteder. Her traff Taliban på en velorganisert motstand.

Men ikke bare militært ble Kabul et konfrontasjonspunkt. Kabul representerer forskjell mellom tradisjon og det moderne. Mellom analfabeter og utdannede. Mellom by og land. Kabul representerer et konsentrat av det etniske mangfold Afghanistan består av. Det var mange i hovedstaden som ikke var særlig begeistret for Talibans strikte tollkninger og alle deres religiøse påbud.

## Kabul representerer et konsentrat av det etniske mangfold Afghanistan består av

Dagens militære opposisjon til Taliban-militsen er Nord-Alliansen. Det er en allianse sammensatt av svært mange grupper, der hver av disse har klare særegne krav til fremtiden. Alliansen har gått i oppløsning og funnet sammen igjen. Den klarer å fungere som et militært press, men har ikke noen enhetlig plattform som tilsier at den skal kunne opptre samlet hvis en reell fredsmulighet skulle se dagens lys.

Ti år etter at Sovjetunionen forlot Afghanistan, er det fremdeles langt igjen til afghanerne selv får avgjøre sin egen fremtid. Men håpet er der, blant annet i at Pakistan nå ser ut til å trekke støtten til Taliban-militsen, skriver Per Hornfelt, formann i Den norske Afghanistankomiteen.

Alliansen hevder at det ikke finnes noen militær løsning på konflikten. Mye tyder på at dette medfører riktighet.

Bak Taliban linjer oppstår det til stadighet kamper. Taliban ekstreme tolkning av islam, som dikteres på en måte som gjør det nødvendig å bevokte egen befolkning. Om Taliban-militsen skulle kunne ta kontroll over Afghanistan måtte de ha gjort dette raskt. Det har nå snart gått fem år. Og det ser ut som om tiden løper ut for Taliban.

Som Nord-Alliansens mangfoldige sammensetning, representerer også Taliban et mangfold av grunner for at ulike grupper har sett det formålstjenlig å gå i takt med Taliban-militsen. I dag framstår det klarere at motsetningene innenfor Taliban, mellom det ekstremt ideologiske representert ved deres ved deres leder Mullah Omar, og de som mener at militsen seg må ha en mer pragmatisk holdning til hverdagen. Forholdet har tilspisset seg. Om Mullah Rabbani, som taler en mer praktisk politikk, heter det at han er til sykehusbehandling i Kandahar.

Dette skjer samtidig som en rekke av Mullah Rabbanis tilhengere er fengslet. Militært har Taliban kombinert overlegen militær styrke, terror og oppkjøp av alliansens medspillere som grunnlag for sin framgang. Dette har ikke gitt noen av dem større politisk anerkjennelse i befolkningen. Noe politisk program ut over deres svært spesielle tolkning av Koranen og det uttalte mål å ta militær kontroll over hele landet, er ikke kommet fra Taliban-militsen. Tvert om ser vi at de som mottar store summer hard valuta og ønsker militsen velkommen den ene dagen, neste dag kan ha arrangert et sviende bakholdsangrep. Oppkjøp skjer i begge fronter og har vært og forblir en måte for mange av de små armerte grupper å overleve på. Etter at Taliban-militsen gjennomførte en regelrett avretting av minoriteter i den nordlige storbyen Mazar i Shariff i august i fjor, ser det ut som at pendelen har snudd for Taliban i nord.

Iran demonstrerte med all tydelighet sin støtte til Nord-Alliansen da de i fjor gjennomførte en kolossal militærøvelse tett opp til den afghanske grensen. Et toglast fra Iran på 70 tonn håndvåpenammunisjon, merket nødhjelp, ble stoppet av de kirgisiske tollmyndigheter i fjor høst. Russerne sitter heller

ikke stille og ser på at Taliban øker sitt territorium. Nord-Alliansen er for russerne et effektivt hinder for at fanatisk islamisme skal spre seg i de sentralasiatiske stater.

## Saudi-Arabia trakk ut sine diplomater i fjor. Det var et politisk og økonomisk nederlag for Taliban-militsen

Saudi-Arabia trakk ut sine diplomater fra Kabul i fjor sommer. Det var et politisk nederlag, men også et direkte økonomisk slag for militsen. Grunnen til Saudi-Arabias ikke lenger anerkjenner Taliban, er at Taliban er vertskap for Osman Bin Laden. Dette er en direkte kollisjonskurs med lederne i Riad. Bin Laden er av USA rangert som den mest etterseekte terrorist i verden. Bin Laden merker at sanden i Kandahar begynner å bli varm. Nylig ble det fra Kandahar opplyst at Bin Laden skal stå for oppførelse av verdens største moské i byen – en appell til Bin Ladens likesinnede og et forsøk på å kjøpe tid hos Mullah Omar. Men spørsmålet er vel heller hvor lenge kan og hvor dyrt må milliardæren Bin Laden betale for seg. Ryktene har gått en stund om at Bin Laden har reiseplaner, men utenom Irak, Tsjenia og fjelldalene i Kashmir er det ikke så mange som ønsker han velkommen. At det ligger store verdier i opium-produksjonen er det ingen tvil om. Taliban som offisielt tar avstand fra slikt, utøver på samme tid kontroll over størstedelen av disse områdene.

Taliban støtter seg fremdeles på Pakistan. Men i det siste har den pakistanske statsminister Nawaz Sharif tatt til orde for at Pakistan som islamsk stat ikke kan kontrollere vold, ekstremisme og terrorisme. Statsministerens uttalelser blir fra flere hold tolket som tegn på endring av Pakistans støtte til Taliban-militsen. Om den pakistanske statsministers ord blir gjort til praktisk politikk, står igjen å se. Gjensidig mistro preger nabostatene.

Mye tyder på at Pakistan har fått flere beskjeder om å foreta et valg. Enten kutte støtten til Taliban, for så å ha et utgangspunkt for å be om hjelp til den alvorlige økonomiske krisen i

Pakistan, eller å ta følgene av å støtte et regime som huser terrorister. Ultimatumet oppfattes å komme fra USA.

Pakistan er i realiteten konkurs, G-7-gruppen over et sterkt press på landet. I fjor var det kun Saudi-Arabia som gav Pakistan et oljelån. Saudi-Arabias krav om utlevering av Bin Laden, er motstridende til Pakistans støtte til Taliban så lenge Bin Laden kan være Taliban-gjest. Siden 1995 har Pakistan vært advart mot at en støtte til Taliban, vil slå tilbake på Pakistan selv. Det siste året har det fra ulike hold i Pakistan blitt meldt om opptøyer ledet av pakistanske Taliban. Sterkt inspirert av sine åndsfrender i Afghanistan her de bl.a. tatt kontroll over byer i det nordvestlige Pakistan.

Summen av de belastninger det etter hvert er for Pakistan å støtte Taliban, begynner å bli så stor at det ikke kan være et grunnlag for en endring i Pakistans forhold til Afghanistan. – en politikk Pakistan kunne starte med vesentlig hjelp fra bl.a. USA, igangsatt lenge før vi så general Gromov vinke farvel til Afghanistan. Mye tyder på at Pakistan snart ikke har noe valg. Skulle statsminister Nawaz Sharifs ord bli en realitet, vil det avhenge av om de pakistanske armegeneraler er enige med statsministeren. Om de skulle være det, trenger Nawaz Sharif verdenssamfunnets støtte.

## En endring i Pakistans politikk overfor Taliban, vil være et sentralt bidrag for at afghanerne selv skal få avgjøre sin egen fremtid

En endring i Pakistans politikk overfor Taliban-militsen, vil være et sentralt bidrag for at afghanerne selv skal få kunne avgjøre sin egen fremtid. Nabostatene må stoppe våpenforsyningene til hver av sine støttespillere i Afghanistan. De grupper som i dag representerer fremtiden, kan sammenfattes som sivilbefolkningen. I rak motsetning til dagens krigsherren står de for et mangfold av krefter som har drevet hverdagen videre under til tider umenneskelige forhold. Hjelpesorganisasjonene som arbeider inne i Afghanistan møter en entusiasme og iver for samarbeid om å nå konkrete sivile mål, fra en befolkning som ikke har gitt opp. De har krav på vår støtte for en fremtid.

## Fikk mest også i fjor

Tidligere Jugoslavia var det landet som også i fjor mottok mest bidragskroner fra Norge. 211 millioner norske bistandskroner gikk til problemområdene på Balkan.

Pengene ble kanalisert gjennom både frivillige norske organisasjoner og internasjonale hjelpeorganisasjoner.

Dette er de 10 nødombadene i verden som fikk mest hjelp fra Norge i fjor:

1. Det tidligere Jugoslavia, 211 millioner kroner
2. Sudan, 124 millioner kroner
3. Rwanda, 63 millioner kroner
4. Afghanistan, 56 millioner kroner
5. Angola, 54 millioner kroner
6. Irak, 52 millioner kroner
7. Burundi, 37 millioner kroner
8. Columbia, 37 millioner kroner
9. Liberia, 33 millioner kroner
10. Nord-Korea, 33 millioner kroner

Rundt 24 prosent av Stortingets budsjett til utviklingshjelp blir kanalisert gjennom frivillige norske organisasjoner.

I 1998 fikk de fem største hjelpeorganisasjonene dette i bistand til humanitær hjelp:

- Norges Røde Kors, 303 millioner kroner
- Norsk Folkehjelp, 303 millioner kroner
- Kirkens Nødhjelp, 255 millioner kroner
- Det Norske Flyktningeråd, 235 millioner kroner
- Redd Barna, 127 millioner kroner

Hvor mye hver enkelt organisasjon eller område vil få til delt i år er ennå ikke avklart.

Midlene blir ikke forhåndsutdelt, men tildeles etter søknad, sier byråsjef Ola Breivik i Utenriksdepartementet.

Men han legger ikke skjul på at hjelpeorganisasjonenes humanitære innsats på Balkan vil motta mer støtte enn i fjor. Årets bistandsbudsjett er på 10 milliarder kroner. Av dette vil frivillige norske organisasjoner trolig også i år få rundt hver fjerde krone.



# Ein moderne nomade

VestlandsNytt

30/4-99

Å flytte på seg for å gå inn i ny jobb, er noko mange kjenner til. Men kanskje neppe så bra som Ingrid Iversen (26) frå Tjørvåg. Neste veke reiser ho nemleg til ein av dei mest avsidde plassane i verda; det nordlige Afghanistan. Der skal ho arbeide som prosjekt-assistent for Afghanistan-komiteen det neste året.



\* Ingrid Iversen (26) reiser neste veke til Afghanistan, der ho skal arbeide for AiN det neste året.

## Afghanistan-komiteen i Norge

er ein solidaritets- og bistandsorganisasjon i Afghanistan, med hovudkontor i Pakistan. Organisasjonen har busar i dei afganske provinane Badkshan og Ghazni. Normalt er det også kontor i hovudstaden Kabul, men på grunn av den spente situasjonen er kontoret for tida stengt.

Afghanistankomiteen (AiN) vart stifta i 1980 som ein reaksjon mot den sovjetiske invasjonen. Sidan den gang har organisasjonen endra seg mot å bli ein profesjonell bistandsorganisasjon. Samstundes held dei fram opinions- og opplysningsarbeidet i Norge. Den overordna målsetjinga for arbeidet er å støtte dei afganske folket si rett til sjølvstende, og bidra til gjenreisning og utvikling av det krigsherja landet.

AiN arbeider med helse og utdanning i Afghanistan og for afganske flyktningar i Pakistan. Dessutan arbeider organisasjonen med naudhjelp, konstruksjon og rehabilitering. I 1998 hadde AiN ei omsetjing på omlag 17 millionar kroner. DU, Nordaf og Fokus er mellom dei viktigaste finansieringskjeldene.

Først reiser eg til Pakistan, der Afghanistan-komiteen har sitt hovudkvarter. Av ulike årsaker er det vanskeleg å ha hovudbasen i sjølve landet, seier Ingrid Iversen.

Når ho snakkar om «ulike årsaker», er det risikoane ved å opphalde seg på talibanstyrte territorium ho snakkar om...

### Midt i blinken

Ingrid Iversen er fødd og oppvaksen i Sandvika i Tjørvåg. Etter det har studiane ført ho frå plass til plass, nesten på same måte som nomadestammene i landet ho no reiser til. Med cand. mag i administrasjons- og organisasjonsvitenskap i Bergen og ein masterdegree i Development management frå London, var ho for ei tid attende klat til å søkje jobb.

Eg har lenge vore oppteken av arbeidet til Afghanistan-komiteen i Norge, så det var på mange måtar naturleg for meg å søkje jobb der, seier ho.

Jobben det var snakk om, var ved hovudkontoret her i Norge. Men då pakistankontoret fekk så papira til Ingrid Iversen, fekk dei heilt andre oppfatningar om korleis dei kunne nytte seg av kompetansen hennar.

Eg vart spurt om eg ville

komme til konferanse i Bergen, og der fekk eg vite kva jobb det var snakk om. Dette var midt i blinken for meg, så eg slo til og sa ja takk, sjølv om det ikkje var jobben eg hadde søkt på. For meg var dette jobbtilbodet vel så fristande, seier ho.

Og kva går så jobben hennar eigentleg ut på?

Afghanistankomiteen har base i Badkshan-provinsen nord i landet, der dei driv med ulike utviklingsprosjekt. Eg skal ha ansvaret for vidareføring av skuleprosjekt, samt å evaluere vidare- og etterutdanninga av lærarane og der løyse andre praktiske problem som ein står overfor...

Du skal i korte trekk få prosjekta til å flyte lettare?

Ja, du kan kanskje seie det slik...

I tillegg skal eg hjelpe den administrative sjeften i området med fleire andre prosjekt, legg ho til.

Nei, nok fredelig land er det nok ikkje. Men i det elles så talibandominerte landet, er området vi skal til fritt...

Der er ikkje litt engstelige for kva som kan skje?

Eg har tenkt over det, og det er klart at det er ein viss

risiko ved å opphalde seg der. Men denne organisasjonen har arbeidd der så lenge, og eg reknar med at dei har gode evakueringsrutinar i tilfelle konflikter eller angrep, seier ho og verkar ikkje spesielt redd for det sein ventar.

### Ein moderne nomade?

Ingrid Iversen har alltid vore glad i å reise rundt, og ho har sjeldan budd lenge på same plass det siste åra. Som ein moderne nomade, nært beslekta med dei gamle nomadestammene i landet ho snart skal reise til kanskje?

Eg har alltid hatt lyst til å reise ut og lære om andre kultur, og det var kanskje denne trongen som vog tyngst då eg bestemte meg for å ta jobben. Det er ei unik moglegheit til å oppleve ein heilt annan måte å leve på. Og eg har stor tru på organisasjonen og prosjekta dei driv, seier ho som ei forklaring på engasjementet sitt.

Afghanistankomiteen legg i sitt arbeid stor vekt på å tilpasse seg dei lokale tilhøva og skikkane. Dei fleste tilsette er afganske. Difor lever dei på norske medarbeidarane der mest muleg som folk rundt seg. Dei et den same maten, og dei går i dei same kledd; det har med ting som respekt og gjensidig tillit å gjere, fortel Ingrid Iversen.

Privatliv blir det lite av når ein bur og arbeider så tett inn på kvarandre.

Om vi skal vere i fred må vi reise vekk, og då går gjerne turen til hovudkontoret i Pakistan. Eg har to venninner som arbeider der, og eg reknar med at det skal bli høve til å helse på dei medan eg er i landet, seier ho.

Det nordlige Afghanistan er for det meste øydemark. TV, radio- og telefonnett er ukjende begrep her. Difor må all kommunikasjon med omverda skje via satellitt-telefon og radiosamband. Reisa til og frå skjer med FN sine faste flytur, ein gong innimellom. Slik får medarbeidarane tilsendt posten sin også.

Kva seier familien til at du skal reise til ein så avsidde plass?

Det er klart dei synest det vert litt langt borte. Men eg har alltid hatt lyst til å gjere slike ting, og difor har dei vist stor forståing og støtta meg. Men det hadde ikkje gått om eg hadde vore i ein familiesituasjon med mann og barn. Dette er ein jobb ein må ta medan ein er ung og fri, seier Ingrid Iversen.

Men no er det ikkje slik at eg skal vere der heilt tid, skundar ho seg å legge til.

Eg har ei gratis heimreise

i løpet av året, og den skal eg gjere meg nytte av, seier ho.

### Umuleg å førebu seg mentalt

Afghanistan er eit fattig land, sterkt prega av etterverkane av den sovjetiske invasjonen på 70- og 80-talet. No er det den interne og ofte blodige kampen om makta som pregar landet og folket.

Er du førebudd på det som menter deg?

Afghanistankomiteen har vore svært flinke til å informere om landet og tilhøva der. Men ein kan ikkje bli mentalt førebudd berre ved å lese om det eller bli fortalt korleis det er. Det er slikt som ein får ta som det kjem, avsluttar Ingrid Iversen.



## The Taliban's strategy for recognition

NEW YORK

### Diplomacy takes over in the fight for Afghanistan

FLUSHING, one of New York's more remote districts, is home to the Taliban's mission to the United Nations. Manhattan might be more convenient, but Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, the head of the mission, says money is tight. A compensation is that most of New York's Afghan population lives in Flushing, and Mr Mujahid and his colleagues have become part of the community. A couple related to the Taliban staff were married last weekend. Afghans came from all over America to see the bride and groom ride through New York in a stretch limo. The Taliban seem well liked in Flushing. It would be helpful, they say, if the rest of the world accorded them approval.

At present, it won't. The Taliban control almost all of Afghanistan but their extreme form of Islamic rule has won them few friends, and recognition only from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Other countries with diplomatic relations with Afghanistan recognise the deposed government, which has the country's seat in the UN General Assembly. UN officials say they have to take note of the Taliban's dominance in Afghanistan. To UN officials Mr Mujahid is the Taliban's representative in New York (rather than "permanent representative designate" to the UN, his own description) and, as such, he has regular meetings with senior officials. The Taliban argue that, once they take control of the last bit of Afghanistan, the UN

will be unable to deny them Afghanistan's General Assembly seat.

This last bit is centred on the Panjshir Valley (see map), defended by forces under Ahmad Shah Masoud, the defence minister of the deposed government. His old allies—once familiar names in every article about Afghanistan such as the politicians Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and the northern warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam—seem to have fled, leaving Mr Masoud to fight a sacrificial rearguard. The Taliban seem confident that, once the winter snows have melted, they will take the valley and Taloqan, the last town in their enemies' hands.

They could be right. Since 1995, when the Taliban first came to world attention, they have had a phenomenal success, which has yet to be fully explained. Their unyielding and often brutal rule has brought order to a chaotic country that suffered first from the Russian occupation and then from civil war. However, even with the whole of Afghanistan in their hands, the General Assembly seat is unlikely to be automatically theirs. The UN's credentials committee, which would make, or defer, a recommendation about who should occupy

the seat, includes among its nine members representatives from America and Russia, which, in a rare bonding, are both critical of the Taliban.

The Russians fear that the Taliban seek to spread their influence among Muslims in the former Soviet states of Central Asia, and perhaps into Russia itself. Russia is one of Mr Masoud's main sources of arms.

The United States has even wider objections. It dislikes the Taliban's record on human rights, particularly their appalling treatment of women and their use of medieval punishments. It also wants the Taliban to extradite Osama bin Laden, whom it believes was involved in the bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August.

This could be the sticking-point for recognition. After the African bombings, Madeleine Albright, the American secretary of state, said that the Taliban would enhance their prospects for American recognition and acceptance by the UN if they stopped harbouring Mr bin Laden. She added that America believed there should be a broad-based government in Kabul. Mrs Albright is also aware of feelings among western women—and notably among American voters—about the treatment of women in Afghanistan. America is not going to be won over easily, however much it would like to see a settlement in Afghanistan.

In seeking to reassure the critics, the Taliban say they aim to run a durable, stable Islamic state that would not interfere with its neighbours. Over women they are defensive, claiming that, by tradition, they do not work outside the home. In talks in Washington with American officials they say they would be willing to consider extraditing Mr bin Laden if the United States offered convincing evidence against him.

Could things change? Mr Mujahid says that within the Taliban there are conservatives and "ultra-conservatives". It may be that the mere conservatives are seeking at the moment to meet the UN's conditions for returning humanitarian workers to Afghanistan. They were withdrawn last August after the deaths of two Afghan UN workers and an Italian military observer. On January 25th, representatives of the Taliban and the UN met in Kandahar. On February 7th, a team of UN officials are due in Kabul and Jalalabad to check on security arrangements. The United States will be watching carefully. If the Americans were ever to recognise the Taliban, other countries would follow fast. "But we are not begging," says Mr Mujahid.

# A call for help from Afghanistan

*Refurbishing small hydro stations offers the best hope for bringing power back to Afghanistan in the near term. Habibullah Frahmam and P W Wicke\* explain why companies are invited to participate in this important work*

In Afghanistan the social and political situation has begun to stabilise. Now international non-governmental organisations and the Taliban authorities are both searching for hydro power companies who would be interested in re-establishing and improving the country's power sector.

Afghanistan has a nominal installed capacity of around 500MW (for a population of 22M people). The bulk of the capacity is in large thermal and hydro stations. The thermal capacity is almost completely out of action at present; the only operating plants are Paktia, a 600kW plant in the province of Khost, and a 48MW plant in Balkh province. Of the hydro power stations around half are

operable (see table). In fact, the most successful plants are currently the smaller hydro plants.

The reason that small hydro plants are still active is that they are managed independently, and are not often part of a centralised grid. This has fitted well with the political administration, such as it has been, where 'warlords' have controlled discrete areas.

As a result, despite the continuing instability in the northern parts of the country, there are good prospects for beginning refurbishment in other areas in the near future.

Preparations for refurbishment were first started in 1990, when the German co-operation agency GTZ began taking

steps towards reconstruction and repair. GTZ's work was focused on two stations, Filkoh near Kandahar, and Asadfabad, near Jalalabad. These plants are located in the east of the country, an area which is very promising with regard to the development of agriculture and natural resources, and which has a history of co-operation with the Germans going back some 20 years. Now, however, the GTZ programme is on standby, because of the 1997 takeover of the region by the Taliban militia.

The Taliban are said to respect the work that is done by NGOs for the benefit of the rural population, but nevertheless relations between the two groups are very cautious.

The location of hydro power plants in Afghanistan



\*Water Committee for Afghanistan

Status of the existing hydro power stations in Afghanistan

Plant	Supplier	Completed	No of turbines	Capacity (kW)	Province	Status
Khanabad	Germany	1950	3	1,130	Kunduz	Inactive
Faizabad	India	1984	3	255	Badakhan	Inactive
Baharak	India	1979	2	200	Badakhan	Inactive
Ghorband	India	1975	3	300	Parwan	Inactive
Atighan	Germany	1950	1	300	Baghlan	Inactive
Chak wardak	Germany	1940	3	3300	Wardak	Inactive
Kajaki	US	1975	2	33,000	Helmand	Inactive
Chahwarcha	Germany	1936	—	80	Herat	Inactive
Jarqodaq	USSR	1979	6	15,000	Jowzjan	Inactive
Filkoh	Germany	1950	2	800	Kandahar	Rebuilt
Mahipar	Germany	1967	3	66,000	Kabul	
Naghlu	USSR	1967	5	110,000	Kabul	Active
Gerishk	US	1961	2	2400	Helmand	Active
Surobi	Germany	1957	2	22000	Kabul	Active
Baba Wail	Germany	1936	1	250	Kandahar	Active
Khoja Gogirdak	USSR	1979	4	2000	Jowzjan	Active
Charikar	China	1973	3	2400	Parwan	Active
Jabel Seraj	US/UK/Germany	1918	4	1500	Parwan	Active
Assadabad	Germany	1983	2	700	Kunar	Rebuilt
Pulikhumri I	Germany	1950	3	4800	Baghlan	Active
Pulikhumri II	USSR	1962	3	9000	Baghlan	Active
Darunta	USSR	1964	3	11,500	Nangarhar	Active

Small hydroelectric stations have a number of technical advantages, compared to the stations associated with large dams, which have in many cases undergone heavy siltation. The small plants feed isolated networks and on many sites operators are still in place, who although they are very much older than the norm still have many skills and a deep knowledge of the plant.

Damage to these small plants from military activity has been slight, as they have been respected by local warlords. However, they have suffered much-increased wear and tear and preventive maintenance has been minimal.

The most important contributors to reducing the availability of these plant have been:

- Lack of spare parts. Funds have not been available to make even minor purchases, and in any case maintenance materials such as grease or high pressure oils have not been available. As a consequence, even low-grade maintenance has been impossible.
- Transmission lines have deteriorated greatly, in many cases as a direct result of military action.
- Land mines have been placed near transmission lines.
- There has been no access to workshop or transport facilities.

Despite these difficulties, operators are doing their best to keep the stations on line. They have also become involved in training young people — previously subject to recruitment into local militia — into operation and maintenance of the plant.

An interesting example of the possibilities in small hydro plant refurbishment is the Darunta station in Jalalabad, which originally had a capacity of 11.5MW. This plant was established in 1963-4 under the Daoud regime with the co-operation of the then-USSR, and all of

the major equipment is still in place. It is connected to the Darunta multipurpose dam (whose other major function was to provide water for the now-defunct Hadda olive plantations), working under a head of 18.5m.

## Suffering heavily

Darunta has three Kaplan turbine/ direct-coupled generator machine sets from the famous St Petersburg works of Leningradsky Metalny Zavod. Now, the main bearings are suffering heavily and some minor gaps already exist, promoting in their turn considerable vertical balancing problems. The thrust bearings have also deteriorated, and are getting worse. Thanks to leaking hydraulic conduits there is not really enough oil pressure to move the wicket gates or for turbine runner blade governing.

In the worst cases it has not been possible for many years to gain access to these important pieces of equipment. As a consequence, grinding devices have been used to cut thick bolts and dismantle equipment compounds.

Russian companies are unlikely to invest in this plant, as their own economic pressures mean their priorities are elsewhere. The Jalalabad owners therefore need investment from elsewhere. They point out that Darunta has much to offer:

- It is a showcase possibility for refurbishment and repair.
- It could be used for hands-on training of a new technical generation — the Technical University of Jalalabad is very close and could use the hydro station as a model application.
- There is a local market for the electricity. The 11.5MW plant previously provided electricity for 40,000 inhabitants. The population now numbers ten times as many, partly because inter-regional gas pipeline investments have held out the

chance of economic growth in the area.

- There are prospects for grid integration in future.

- Reviving the power plant may help promote revival of the associated infrastructure. This would mean institutional strengthening, promoting new enterprises, improving irrigation and reviving rational water use — in the interim, much of the irrigation water has been diverted to poppy fields.

- It will help in managing siltation behind the dam.

Projects such as this are an important contribution to the future of Afghanistan, and may be the beginning of projects to exploit the several thousand MW of hydro potential within the country.

Starting up a hydro industry in a country with geography as unforgiving as that of Afghanistan required a huge number of obstacles to be overcome. In the early years of this century, for example, roads did not exist in many areas and heavy equipment for the 1500kW Jabel Seraj plant, north of Kabul, was brought in by elephant across the much-disputed Khyber Pass. Other equipment followed this route, even into the 1930s. Now, overcoming the obstacles to rebuilding and expanding the industry requires as much persistence.

Most of the Afghan small hydro industry is in need of refurbishment. 'Rehabilitate, own operate' and 'rehabilitate, own, operate, transfer' schemes are all available, and companies are invited to participate.

*\*Habibullah Frahmmand, formerly with the Ministry of Planning, Kabul, now a consultant to German Agro Action, Peshawar, Pakistan, and P W Wicke, SOWISWAS, 38302 Wolfenbüttel, Germany*



## AFGHANISTAN

*The Taliban are quietly starting to edge out of their international isolation. A once-hostile China is offering trade ties to try to stem Afghan support for Uighur separatists. And as our second story shows, even the United States is engaged in uneasy talks with the extremist Islamic regime.*

# Taliban Temptation

By Ahmed Rashid in Islamabad

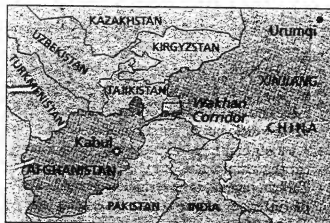
As Kabul was about to fall to the mujahideen seven years ago, China locked up its embassy and ended all official contact with Afghanistan. But the two sides moved towards detente in early February, when five senior Chinese diplomats arrived in Kabul for talks with the ruling Taliban. After the encounter, the Chinese announced they had agreed to start direct flights between Kabul and Urumqi, the capital of the troubled Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, and open formal trade ties with the Taliban.

The first public Chinese contact with the Taliban alarmed India, which is nervous about Chinese influence in South Asia. It also took Western governments by surprise; they have shunned the extreme Islamic fundamentalist movement due to its repressive treatment of women and its harbouring of alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden. But analysts say that the Chinese visit was driven primarily by pragmatism and does not signal a strategic shift in Beijing's attitude towards the Afghan leadership.

Western and Pakistani diplomats say the contact is an attempt by Beijing to stem the flow into Xinjiang of two unwanted Taliban exports: cheap heroin and Islamic fundamentalism. The drugs, which enter via Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor and supply routes through Pakistan, feed a growing addiction problem in China. Even more worrying, Taliban-style fundamentalism is fuelling the Uighur Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang—a movement Beijing now admits poses a serious threat to national security.



China is worried because the Taliban's fundamentalist ideas are infecting the Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang.



"We believe that the Taliban or those close to them have already carved out drug routes into Xinjiang," said a senior adviser to the Chinese Foreign Ministry at the World Economic Forum in Davos in early February. "Afghanistan is now the world's largest supplier of heroin, and drug addiction is a growing problem in China."

The Chinese visit to Kabul was prompted by requests from Pakistan, China's oldest and closest ally in Asia and one of only three governments that recognize the Taliban. (Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates also recognize the movement.) Pakistan has been trying to

convince Beijing that the Taliban, to which it gives substantial military and financial aid, are willing to clamp down on the drug trade and have no desire to fund or support Islamic Uighurs in their fight for independence. "We urged China and the Taliban to establish formal contacts so that their mutual mistrust can be eliminated," says a Pakistani diplomat. "The Taliban pose a threat to nobody and want the best of relations with China."

That's just what New Delhi is afraid of. "From the point of view of India, this is cause for concern since now—assuming

that the news of the flight is correct—Pakistan, China and the Taliban together will form a sort of alliance against the country," says P.R. Chari, an analyst at the New Delhi-based Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. India has charged that the Taliban are aiding Islamic separatists in Kashmir.

China has said it will not decide on official recognition of the Taliban government, which controls 80% of Afghanistan, until the United Nations determines its position on the issue. The Chinese announcement, which was light on details and lacked a timetable, is nonetheless a first step toward closer ties. A Western ambassador in Islamabad says China is hoping that by holding out the prospect of improved relations, the Taliban, who are desperate for recognition from the international community, will clamp down on drug runners and cut off support for ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang.

The Taliban have used profits from the drug trade to finance their operations, and Chinese officials fear Uighur separatists could do the same. Uighur Islamic militants have long been students of Afghan rebels. They have trained and fought with the Afghan mujahideen since 1986. Many Uighurs also study in Islamic schools, or *madrassas*, run by the Taliban. After the movement's conquest of most of Afghanistan in 1998, it inherited those Uighurs still in the country as well as links to a number of Uighur groups in Xinjiang. Western intelligence sources say Uighur militants also have ties with bin Laden, whom the United States wants in connection with the bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa last year. Bin Laden had holed up in southern Afghanistan for

# Mission Impossible?

Taliban tries to mend fences with the U.S.

By Sadanand Dhume in New York

months before fleeing his sanctuary on February 12, fearing a second U.S. missile strike on his camp.

Huge quantities of consumer goods, foodstuffs and heroin are smuggled across the border between Afghanistan and China. Western intelligence officials say almost all of the arms and explosives Uighurs used in recent attacks on Chinese security forces have also come from Afghanistan.

Such attacks have increased in the past 12 months and unrest in Xinjiang has spread. For the first time in years, Chinese officials now admit there is a crisis. "Xinjiang is special in that it is the constant target of separatists both inside and outside the country," Xinjiang Communist Party chief Wang Lequan was quoted as saying in the *Xinjiang Daily* on January 22. In the article, Wang admitted that widespread corruption and rising crime rates were threatening social stability in the region.

The most serious recent incident occurred in Urumqi on February 12. According to the Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in China, five Uighurs were injured and 150 others arrested after Uighur youths shouting pro-independence slogans clashed with police. The Chinese press did not report the incident.

In early January, 29 Muslim militants were arrested in Xinjiang for allegedly masterminding anti-government riots in February 1997 in Yining, a city north of Urumqi near the border with Kazakhstan. Two of the militants were executed on January 28. During the violent riots, demonstrators had called for the formation of an independent Islamic state. Yining is still simmering and in early February some 9,000 armed police drawn from People's Liberation Army infantry divisions were sent to the city of 300,000 people to tighten security.

Amnesty International issued a statement in early February alleging that Chinese officials arbitrarily arrested and tortured large numbers of Uighurs between April and September 1998 for supporting Uighur separatists or encouraging fundamentalism. The Foreign Ministry termed the statement "baseless and irresponsible."

The Uighur opposition, however, remains split between supporters of secular nationalism and proponents of Islamic fundamentalism. Beijing is aware that a further clampdown on Uighurs could lead to greater political and religious tension. But it fears that if it relaxes its grip, Islamic fundamentalism could spread. In the meantime, China is attempting to mollify one source of trouble—the Taliban. ■

Unlike most New York diplomats, Abdul Hakeem Mujahid doesn't have an office in Manhattan. Instead, the Taliban Islamic movement's ambassador-designate to the United Nations works out of a sparsely furnished fourth-floor apartment in an unfashionable part of Queens. The walls are covered with maps of Afghanistan and sayings from the Koran. On the street below, small kebab joints jostle for space with Chinese take-outs and Indian video parlours.

Far removed from the traditional centre of New York diplomacy, Mujahid, who

carries a diplomatic passport issued by the Taliban regime, is nevertheless at the heart of intense negotiations between the Taliban and the United States. Fearing air strikes and hoping for international legitimacy and increased foreign aid, the Taliban have stepped up efforts to mend fences with Washington. The alleged disappearance of suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden from Taliban-controlled territory in late February appears to be part of this process. But the militant Islamic group's unwillingness to hand over the Saudi multimillionaire, U.S. corporations' diminished interest in a gas pipeline across Afghanistan, and outrage over the Taliban's treatment of women ensure that relations with the U.S. will remain limited and uneasy.

"The Taliban are trying to be responsible," says Barnett Rubin, an expert on Afghanistan at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations. "But the gap between the two sides is still very wide."

In recent weeks, the U.S. has intensified pressure on the Taliban to hand over bin Laden, whom the U.S. has accused of heading a vast network of terror aimed at American interests around the world. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth has twice met with Mujahid and other senior Taliban officials. A few days before the first meeting in Islamabad in early February, Richard Clarke, the recently appointed White House anti-terrorism tsar, announced that

the U.S. reserved the right to retaliate against any country that knowingly provided sanctuary to terrorists. Analysts say the Taliban took this shift in policy to be a direct threat. Within weeks of the Islamabad meeting, the group announced that bin Laden had left Taliban-controlled territory.

Bin Laden's mysterious departure appears to be an attempt by the Taliban to defuse U.S. pressure without betraying the

group's public statement that the Saudi is an honoured guest who will not be surrendered or asked to leave Afghanistan. It's a pledge the movement's leaders cannot afford to break: Many followers of the Taliban's militant brand of Islam revere bin Laden for his role in the Afghan *jihad*, or holy war, against the Soviet Union and for seeking to drive the U.S. out of Saudi Arabia and other Islamic lands.

"Bin Laden fought for 14 years and spent millions of dollars for our cause," says Mujahid. "It is against our Islamic character and Afghan traditions to hand him over or to say where he is."

Still, bin Laden's disappearance has bought the Taliban room for negotiation. The movement is also trying to win friends in the West by cracking down on heroin factories along Afghanistan's border with

Pakistan and is hoping for a return of support from an old American friend—California-based oil and gas company Unocal. The Taliban hope to win U.S. support for their efforts to wrest Afghanistan's official seat at the UN from the former government of Burhanuddin Rabbani. The group also wants the U.S. to ease diplomatic pressure on Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to cut back support for its activities, and seeks U.S. backing for more humanitarian aid from multilateral donors.

Analysts say the Taliban's hopes are unrealistic. At present, the movement's chances of winning formal recognition from either the U.S. or the UN are practically nonexistent. The U.S. remains committed to recognizing only "a broad-based government" in Afghanistan, diplomatic speak for a government that includes more than one Afghan faction. "Right now the chances of diplomatic recognition are nil," says Rubin. "The Taliban can only hope for increased contact, perhaps through a liaison office in the U.S. embassy in Islamabad."

For President Bill Clinton's administration, recognition of the Taliban is not politically viable. More than 130 feminist and human-rights groups have joined the Washington-based Feminist Majority Foundation to draw attention to the Taliban's restrictions on women's education, health-care and employment opportunities. In a report published in late February, the U.S. State Department said the Taliban's treatment of women "represented perhaps the most severe abuse of women's human rights in the world."

To make matters worse for the Taliban, Unocal has said it has no intention of rejoining a consortium to build a \$2.7 billion gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan. In December, a Unocal spokesperson cited falling oil prices and downward estimations of demand for gas in Pakistan as reasons for its pullout from the project. Independent analysts say pressure from women's groups and the Taliban's association with bin Laden also played a part in the firm's decision. With Unocal out of the picture, the Taliban has lost its only important corporate ally in Washington.

Mujahid faces an uphill climb. Unless the Taliban can find ways to disassociate themselves from bin Laden and change their policies toward women, the most they can expect from the U.S. is enhanced diplomatic contact and perhaps larger flows of multilateral aid. For now, the prospects of Mujahid moving to Manhattan to take his place among official delegates at the United Nations are exceedingly dim. ■

# Kabul's lone orphanage can't even afford hot water

**AFGHANISTAN :** Orphanage officials say it's never been this bad. They have no warm clothes for the children, no medicine, no hot water, no money — and very little international aid

Bomkok Pdsy 14/2-99

KATIVY CANNON  
Kabul, AP

**E**very day the poorest in Kabul intrude to the city's only orphanage, begging on the streets and pleading with the weather-beaten giant to take their children.

And every day, the old man behind the giant steel gates of Tahy Massan Orphanage turns them away.

"They beg us to please take their children, but we can't," said Amir Uddin, the man in charge of the orphanage's dormitories where about 400 children live.

"We don't want to turn them away... (but) we can't take any more children. We have nothing for the ones we have."

Many of the children at the orphanage have at least one living parent, usually a mother alone, unable to support her children.

International aid organisations say there are 26,000 children in Kabul who survive by scavenging through bombed-out buildings, salvaging scraps of metal, unexploded warheads and wood.

Impoverished by a protracted civil war that followed the withdrawal of occupying Soviet soldiers in 1989, life has been a hardship for Kabul's 1 million residents.

But officials at the orphanage say it's never been this bad. They have no warm clothes for the children, no medicine, no hot water, no money and very little international aid.

Foreign aid workers pulled out of Kabul in July because of a dispute with the ruling Taliban religious army, which ordered them to relocate to abandoned school dormitories. The groups barked and left in protest.



**Rahim, 10, cries before the grave of his grandfather as his friend reads the Holy Koran at the Haghane cemetery north of Kabul. Children in Afghanistan's beleaguered capital struggle to survive with very little food and only tattered sweaters to protect them against the bitter winter cold. — AP**

"Look around. We have nothing," Mr Uddin said. "But the worst thing is our bath house. We have no hot water and it is just a cement box. It is freezing."

Some of the youngest children haven't had a bath in six weeks. Sores have developed on their heads and faces.

Mr. Uddin says it's a trade off. With

might be available in the market. Despite his efforts, most of the younger children have a cough. They huddle for warmth around the single wood-fired heater in every room.

During a reporter's recent visit, more than a dozen 2 and 3 years olds in one stark, cement-floor room were wearing scrunny jackets and sweaters. Half were bare foot.

One little girl wore only one pink plastic sandal. Asked where her other shoe was, she looked down at her foot and shrugged.

"Maybe someone else has it on," she said. The International Red Cross supplies the orphanage with firewood and has given some sweaters and blankets. Mr Uddin said. Shoes have been donated to the orphans, but mostly for the older children and usually in just two sizes — six and nine, he added.

Thinking a visiting stranger could help get him another pair of shoes, one little boy said: "I like my shoes, but do you have another pair? My shoes are size six, but my feet are size eight."

The small children are cared for by two women, who are helped by the older girls. Eleven and 12-year-old girls walk around with little ones perched on their hips.

"My life is worse than the children," said Dili Jan, an elderly woman who has worked at the orphanage for 17 years.

Still, the widow, without children of her own, refused to leave the orphanage when Taliban troops first took over Kabul in September 1996 and sent all working women home and closed all schools.

"These are my children. I wouldn't leave them," Mrs Jan said.

*Thailand Post* 6/8-99

**AMIR SHAI**  
Kal Khushal, Associated Press

**A** 13-member family tea and bread for breakfast. Dinner is usually potatoes in grease. Lunch is a luxury they cannot afford.

Winters are usually tough in Hazarajat, an isolated area that is home to Afghanistan's minority Shi'ite Muslims, but late rains and the effects of the nation's civil war have made this year even worse.

the United Nations' World Food Programme in neighbouring Pakistan, said Hazarajat risks a severe food shortage and malnutrition during the bitterly cold winter months ahead. It is now the focus of a WFP effort to get wheat to its hungry people.

Many of the better-off farmers in the area have sold their few sheep and other animals to buy food. But with the animals went the wool and skins that people have traditionally used to make warm clothing.

old Mohammed Hasan said 10 people have died of malnutrition in recent months. He said people have begun to eat plants that once were given only to animals.



*Afghans from*

**minority of the  
Hazara  
region in  
Afghanistan  
move from their  
home town of  
Bamsan through  
Kal Khushal.  
The Taleban**

**controls most of  
Bamyan, but  
there are still  
areas where  
opposition  
soldiers and**

*Taeban are fighting. For local people the primary concern seems to be not who wins, but that there is peace. —AP*

The civil war has severely damaged roads and hampered farming.

But the delay in rains and a lack of snowfall this winter mean farmers have lacked water needed to sow wheat and barley. And the fighting between the Taliban religious army and Afghanistan's northern-based opposition alliance has made the situation worse.

The Taliban, which controls most of the province where Hazarajat is located, lack the funds to rebuild

his name only as Qasim. "We have not seen any bad attitude from Khabuli is open, which will allow them access to what they need - food and trade."

Rather, the Hazaras said the Taliban's rule means the road to Khabuli is open, which will allow them access to what they need - food and trade.

Wrapped inside a dirty brown blanket against the winter cold, Gul Mohammed rubs his right hand, knowing it will be chopped off soon.

During a rare visit by a reporter inside a Taliban prison, Mohammed admitted he stole the equivalent of \$60 (2,220 baht) from a neighbour, but said he did so to feed his nine children.

In the 90 percent of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban religious militia, those caught thieving have their hands or feet amputated — in serious thefts, both. Murderers are executed publicly and those caught for lesser crimes are often lashed in public.

"The first thing in my heart is my family... I don't care about my hand," said Mohammed, a guard by his side with a Kalashnikov rifle slung casually over his shoulder.

Mohammed reckoned he could find work with one hand. "I will be a porter maybe. I'll do something," he said.

His amputation is scheduled for Friday.

For crimes less serious than stealing — trimming a beard, for example — culprits receive five lashes and up to three weeks in jail. Even playing music is a crime, as is owning a video cassette recorder or books published outside Afghanistan.

Women who are found to have spent time with someone other than a close male relative can be given up to 100 lashes. The same punishment goes for a woman who is not covered fully in a *burqa* — an all-enveloping garment that shrouds a woman from head to toe and allows her to see through a mesh that covers the eyes.

"Before we had more criminals mostly thieves, but publicly punishing people and lashing women has taught people, and now they are listening," said Maulvi Sharifuddin Fiqri, the warden of Afghanistan's largest prison, Pul-e-Charkhi, where Mohammed is jailed on the outskirts of the capital, Kabul.

Amputations, like all punishments in the capital region, are carried out at an execution stadium in Kabul.

Pick-up trucks bring the thieves to the field and ambulances take them

away. Doctors in blue smocks and surgical masks administer an anesthetic before performing the amputations. Convicted killers are executed by relatives of their victims, who also have the authority under Islam to forgive the criminal and accept blood money in

stead. Dozens have been executed; so far no one has taken the money.

But not all punishments have been clearly defined in the Muslim holy book, the Koran, which the Taleban say they follow to the letter when determining laws and punishment.

For example, the Taliban laboured over the appropriate punishment for homosexual acts, which they consider a crime under Islam.

A council of clerics met in southern Kandahar, the seat of the Taleban government, to mull over the problem. They planned initially to bury culprits up to their necks in sand and then drop a wall on them.

But eventually they decided to place them in front of a brick wall and send it crashing down using a tank. After 30

crashing down using a tank. After 30 minutes, the rubble is removed and anyone who survives is exonerated.

At least three people have survived, including an old man convicted of rap-

Some in Afghanistan believe the Taliban's heavy-handed approach is working, and say they don't even lock their

doors any more. Others consider the punishments gruesome and offensive.

In January, the hands and feet of several thieves were amputated and left hanging from trees in the heart of Kabul.

"It was not good... I couldn't eat meat for eight days," said a shop owner, who identified himself only as Abdullah.

There are 520 prisoners in Pul-e-Charkhi prison, which once was capable of holding thousands. Much of it was destroyed during the bitter fighting between rival Islamic factions in the

In the office of the prison warden, a dozen Taliban men sat cross-legged on the carpeted floor eating a breakfast of unleavened bread and a mixture of grease and eggs, washed down with

sugary tea. Semi-automatic rifles hung on the walls.

prisoners — soldiers loyal to opposition leader Ahmed Shah Massood, said

There are three courts in the Taliban justice system: military, civilian and the

justice system: military, civilian and the Supreme Court; and there is only one right of appeal, to the Taliban's supreme commander, Mullah Mohammed Omar.

## Taleban justice exacts amputations and lashings

KATHY GANNON *The Nation*  
Pul-e-Charkhi, Afghanistan, AP 3/3/99

## S. Arabia refuses visa to Mullah Rabbani

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - The Saudi government has reportedly refused to issue a visit visa to the president of Taliban interim government Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, it was learnt on good authority here on Tuesday.

Afghan sources disclosed that the ailing president of the Taliban government had been seeking a visa to Saudi Arabia where he desired to undergo treatment, but to no avail.

Mullah Rabbani, who is considered to be an all-weather friend of the Gulf Arab kingdom, moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) about four weeks back from where he again applied for a visa to Saudi Arabia. However, again he was denied the same, the sources add. It could not be ascertained as to on

what grounds the Saudis rejected the visa application of the senior-most Taliban leader.

Saudi Arabia is among the three countries which have so far recognised the Taliban government in Kabul. The other two are Pakistan and the UAE. However, relations between the two countries soared between Kabul and Riyadh over Taliban's continued support to millionaire Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden.

The Saudi government's refusal to issue a visa to Rabbani is being seen here as a latest blow to the relations between the two countries which have touched their ebb in recent weeks.

There was however no confirmation of the report from independent sources.

## Eight killed in Kabul earthquake

Nafion 981213

KABUL (AFP) - Eight people were killed when a building collapsed overnight after a series of earthquakes struck the Afghan capital in recent days, residents said Saturday.

They said rescuers dug two survivors from the wreckage after an intense tremor in Kabul at about 1:00 am Saturday.

One resident said the dead were travellers, four of them from the same family, and were in transit from Kunduz in the far north to Kandahar in the south.

Afghanistan is notoriously earthquake-prone and reporting procedures are virtually non-existent. Two earthquakes in northeast Afghanistan killed some 8,000 people earlier this year.

# Afghanistan main producer of poppy, says ANF

Fp 981210 Pakistan has four million drug addicts

By SHAH NAWAZ KHAN

PESHAWAR - There are more than four million drug user living in the country who spent 72 billion rupees on various drugs last year, which amounted to half of the defence budget of Pakistan.

This was disclosed by Brig. Ikram-ul-Hassan, Director, Headquarters, Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), Wednesday during a one-day workshop on "Irrational Use of Psychotropic Drugs" at a local hotel in Peshawar.

"When the production of opium was allowed after 1954, the country produced 7.19 metric tons of opium during the years from 1955 to 1975," Brig Ikram said.

He added that when heroin was introduced in Pakistan in the 80s, it pushed all the other drugs into the background. According to a survey conducted in 1993, 1.52 million people were heroin-addicts out of the total addicts of 3.1 million in the country and the ratio has increased to 7 per cent by 1998.

The ratio of the drug users in the urban areas is 52 per cent and in the rural areas it is 48 per cent, out of which 60 per cent are educated and employed and under the age of 35 years. He added that the per month income of an individual in Pakistan was Rs. 3,054 while his expenditure on drugs was Rs. 1,259 per month.

He claimed that all the heroin laboratories in Pakistan had been shifted to Afghanistan which is producing 2,800 tons of opium yearly. He added that this year it would be limited to 2,500 tons due to some restrictions. He

claimed that Afghanistan was a main producer of the poppy crop and some 60 per cent of it went into the making of heroin which was supplied to Turkey (for further purification). He added that Helmand, Qandahar and Ningarhar were the provinces where the crop was cultivated.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Saeed Farooq, assistant professor of psychiatry at the LRH, said that every fifth patient had some psychiatry problems in the country. By the year 2020, he said, mental depression would be the second major problem of the mankind according to a World Bank report.

He continued that according to the British Medical Journal (BMJ), Pakistan was the only country where daily 4.5 drugs were being registered. He added that Psychotropic drugs were being used irrationally because of improper education and information on the part of both the doctors and patients.

He stressed upon the importance of psychiatry lectures in the medical colleges routine and said that the spending of Rs 72 billion on drugs was a misfortune of the nation.

Dr Iqbal Shalhean, Homeophysician, said that as far as the homeopathic medicines were concerned, there was no concept of Psychotropic drugs.

He added that it was the doctor's duty not to prescribe Psychotropic drugs to patients without diagnosing the cause of the disease. He claimed that multi-national companies were purchasing 900 tons of opium from India, 600 tons from Turkey and 1,000 tons from the oth-

er countries of the region for use in the manufacture of psychotropic drugs.

Earlier, the chief guest, the additional chief secretary of the NWFP, Shakil Durrani, in his inaugural speech said that poppy cultivation in the area had been ended while across the boarder it was still in vogue. He claimed that heroin use had been stabilised in the country after control on the poppy production.

Durrani added that the government had a plan to construct a separate hospital for drug users as they had no such place where treatment could be provided to them. He said that presently the drug users were kept with the criminals though they were not so. He hoped that such workshops would bring awareness to the masses and the medical community in the field.

Dr Umar Ayub Khan, provincial chief of the Pakistan Doctors Association (PDA), said that after the announcement of the national health policy the irrational use of psychotropic drugs should be banned throughout the country. He added that the health policy should be made in such a manner which should be acceptable, affordable and attainable in the present situation.

He added that they were against the state and street torture in the country which was the cause for the use of psychotropic drugs.

The workshop was addressed by Dr Nasreen Rubi, associate professor of Gynae, LRH, Dr Shamim Majeed, professor of Gynae, HMC, Dr Samad, LRH, Dr Jamila Bilal, LRH and Dr Nasreen Iftikhar, coordinator, PM's programme, Peshawar. Later, certificates were distributed amongst the participants.



# FP 981210 Taliban offer to ban drugs for UN recognition

— in push to phase out poppy cultivation

DUBAI (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban regime would outlaw the production of heroin and other drugs in exchange for UN recognition, the Islamic militia's leader Mullah Mohammad Omar said in an interview printed Wednesday.

"The United Nations have to recognise the Taliban, in exchange for a total ban on growing opium and the production of other drugs, Omar told the United Arab Emirates newspaper *Al-Itihad*.

"The Taliban government has stopped the planting and production of hashish but there has been no response for anyone whatsoever," he added.

The UN Security Council, which still recognises the government of ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbini, adopted Tuesday a resolution threatening the Taliban with sanctions unless a ceasefire is put in place in Afghanistan.

The United Nations has also urged the regime in Kabul to halt discrimination against women and other human rights abuses as well as to stop narcotic trafficking.

Only the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan recognise the Taliban government which controls more than 90 percent of Afghanistan.

AIMAL KHAN adds: In an effort to break out of international isolation and generate much-needed revenue, the cash-strapped Taliban government has embarked upon a plan to phase out poppy cultivation, substituting it with exportable cash crops.

Reports reaching here from across the Durand Line said that the Taliban administration had asked farmers in the Kabul region to grow onion crop instead of poppy. Taliban officials have reportedly been visiting areas around the Afghan capital for the last two weeks, urging poppy-growers to switch over to the onion crop, which takes less time maturing.

The Afghan officials are learnt to have assured the farmers that their produce would be exported to Dubai to earn greater foreign exchange.

A large number of farmers have heeded the Taliban advice, switching over to onion cultivation. "It is precisely for this reason that prices of onion seeds have shot up from 470,000 afghanis to 114,000 afghanis a kilo over the last fortnight," a credible Afghan source revealed.

The source added that the Taliban had recently struck a deal with a Dubai-based party for onion exports, which would start "sooner rather than later."

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of poppy, the bulk of which is produced in

eastern parts of the war-ravaged country. The Taliban rose to power in Kabul in September 1996 and poppy production has since increased considerably.

The puritanical student militia has often been accused by the West and Iran of promoting drug-trafficking in the region. Taliban's credibility has taken a dive as they themselves allowed poppy cultivation in areas under their control. "Even today, each of the growers give the rulers every eighth kilogram of poppy in tax."

The Taliban have been publicly defending their policy of

Afghanistan and the adjoining tribal belt of Pakistan have been cultivating poppy for centuries largely due to very high profits the crop offers. Also the crop needs less labour as compared to other crops. In tribal areas, a farmer can earn up to Rs 6,000 for a kilogram of poppy.

promoting poppy cultivation in the countryside, where poverty, hunger and disease stalk whole areas. They argue that if the West and the United States are really interested in controlling poppy cultivation, they should compensate growers with an alternative source of income.

## Landmine clearing agencies gear up work in Afghanistan

Nation 981211

From Marjan Ali Shah

PESHAWAR - Despite the advent of winter, the activities of landmines clearing agencies are in full swing as nearly 2 lakhs sq metres of agricultural land and residential area have recently been handed over to the returned refugees in Gardoz and Paktia while about 15 kilometres of road have been cleared in various locations of Paktia Province.

Most of the mines action teams have shifted to the warmer eastern and southern province, due to the bad weather in winter season. It may be recalled here that the presence of about 10 millions anti-tank and anti-personnel landmines across Afghanistan is the main handle in repatriation of Afghan refugees.

The Russian invaders and the infighting between the Afghan Mujahideen groups, which still continued, landmines in every nook and corner of the war-torn Afghanistan in order to protect their areas from the attackers. According to survey, most of the landmines are laid after the withdrawal of Russian troops, by various Mujahideen groups around their controlled areas even in agriculture land, irrigation channels and hill tops. These land mines have so far rendered disabled

600,000 Afghans, out of which 30 per cent are children as in more than one thousand villages the poor were facing mines problems.

Since long, a number of demining agencies with the financial and technical support of foreign donors are busy to clear Afghanistan from mines but this difficult task will not take only years to complete but also needed a huge amount. Russia, China, Italy, Iran, India and Pakistan are the main responsible countries for laying landmines in Afghanistan in the 18 years long war. Landmines harm the civilians and their environment to a far greater extent than military purpose and it takes 100 times longer to remove a landmines than lay while a mine costs US \$ 3 to produce but needed US \$ 1000 to clear.

The UNOCHA has finalised interim report on "socio-economic impact study of mines action operation in Afghanistan" which illustrated links between mines action and other sectoral activities.

According to the preliminary report over 1.5 millions refugees have returned to the areas cleared from mines and unexploded organs which provided direct employment opportunities for 10,000 farmers and primary indus-

try workers and increased agricultural outputs and livestock related products.

According to the UN weekly updated about the other activities inside Afghanistan, the demining agencies had also expedited their campaign to educate the general public about the mines presence and how to protect themselves or to take precautionary measures.

For this purpose they had established various training schools in mosques, schools, hujras and other public places for informing the Afghans about the destruction of landmines and practically inform them to protect themselves from this anti human product. In this connection, the Afghan campaign to ban landmines arranged a seminar in Kabul in which a large number community representatives, technical institutions, senior officials, ICRC, members of the ACBL Committee and other aid agencies took active part.

Despite the land mines activities, in the rehabilitation activities UNGHS Kabul completed two major projects, the restoration of National Gallery of Afghanistan and the construction of irrigation dam at Boodkhel-Tarakhail.

# Aid agencies launch \$115m appeal for Afghanistan

Nation 981217

ISLAMABAD (APP)—Aid agencies here and in Geneva Wednesday asked donors for US \$115 million to support their 1999 assistance activities to save lives, ensure human rights and build sustainable livelihoods in Afghanistan.

The appeal launched by the United Nations on Wednesday reflects a new unified approach to aid activities in Afghanistan, forged by the UN in 1998 and endorsed last week by donors meeting in Tokyo.

The UN requested funding for the top priority activities out of a total portfolio of projects worth \$185 million, \$28 million more than agencies sought for 1998. These include demanding, preventative health care, community-based development programs and emergency food aid.

In their appeal, the agencies noted that while peace continued to elude the people of Afghanistan, now entering its 20th year of war, progress has been made which requires continued international support to sustain.

The UN and other international agencies and NGOs in Afghanistan have saved millions of lives threatened by poverty, war and natural disaster by supplying food, medical assistance and shelter. In this year alone, two major earthquakes, flooding and an internal military blockade prompted major, multi-agency emergency operations. Increased fighting created new refugees and displacement. Poor harvests and impenetrable front lines put hundreds of thousands at risk of extreme hunger.

Aid groups this year helped Afghans to rebuild Kabul's sanitation system and to reconstruct and rehabilitate hospitals, schools, agricultural systems and roads around the country. The UN's mine action programme in Afghanistan, the largest in the world, is clearing land and housing for re-habilitation and the return of refugees. International agencies have also worked to ensure the protection of human rights and gender equality as Afghans knit

their societies together again.

"The international community must remain engaged in these activities, not only to save lives but to assist Afghans to build a sustainable future," says Erick de Mul, UN Humanitarian Coordinator.

Aid programmes have continued in Afghanistan although most international workers have remained out of the country since the U.S. missile strikes on Osama bin Laden's headquarters in August. Negotiations are ongoing with Taliban authorities on creating a secure environment for the return of all staff and full-scale assistance.

The full text and project proposals of the Afghanistan Appeal are available through the Internet at [www.undpafg.org.pk](http://www.undpafg.org.pk), as well as on compact disks available from the UN Coordinators' office in Islamabad.

For more information, contact Brigitte Neubacher, 92-51-211-451, or Susan Manuel, 92-351-450-1751,

## Winter misery for Afghanistan's poor

Nation 981217

KABUL (AFP) - Dry timber is in demand, food is hoarded and farmers pray for rain. In Afghanistan winter is late, spelling more fighting and further hardship.

Aid workers say the situation has been aggravated this year by the absence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and a local economy which has essentially crumbled.

A World Food Program (WFP) study found 44 per cent of the population in the central region of Hazarajat were vulnerable with people sharing a single room with livestock and living off animal feed.

"The hospitals in Yawkawlang and Panjao are apparently in dire straits with no medicine, fuel, money or staff," a WFP spokeswoman told AFP.

Up to 80 families a day are abandoning their homes for Ghazni and Kabul. "Apparently the men often leave to find work in the winters, but this winter the food situation is so bad that entire families are leaving," the spokeswoman said.

In Kabul, shops are well stocked but inflation and a 22 per cent fall in the local currency against the US dol-

lar over recent weeks has priced even basic necessities out of the reach of most people.

An 18-month blockade of central provinces by the Taliban, who claim 80 per cent of the country, and two years of bad crops has forced people to sell their assets to survive.

The WFP estimated that up to 80 per cent of this year's wheat crop was

lost to disease while 160,000 people, made-up of female-headed households and landless families, had been identified for emergency aid.

Their plight is reflected on the shelves of Kabul's markets, but "you can only sell your possessions once," a western aid worker observed.

A street vendor said he made two-to-three dollars a day selling maize, almost enough to support his family. A rival trader proclaimed: "We rely on Allah for the rest".

On Chicken Street, in Kabul's dilapidated tourist precinct, food importer Assadullah said profits have fallen 30 per cent since the UN evacuation.

Fp 981224

### 3 mass graves found in Afghanistan

PESHAWAR (NNI)

Three mass graves have been discovered in Zabul province of Afghanistan. Latest reports say that these mass graves have been found in the suburb of Zabul province in Afghanistan. One of the graves has been unearthed in a desert between Chopan district and Swadavi district having 30-50 bodies in it. Two more graves have been identified in Dasht-i-Qazi in Arghandab district with twenty-five to thirty five bodies. It is not yet known whether the bodies are of the northern alliance, Taliban or civilians.

# Cost of defending Taliban

News 981217

## Prof Khalid Mahmud

**S**ponsoring the Taliban as the lawful authority in Kabul will lead us nowhere. Ambassador Ahmad Kamal fought a losing battle the other day when he tried to convince the UN Security Council that the Taliban regime was quite capable of securing peace and stability in Afghanistan. Nobody listened to his lone voice of dissent as the Security Council adopted a unanimous resolution, censuring the student militia for failure to conclude a ceasefire and resume negotiations with rival Afghan factions for setting up a broad-based coalition. The mood at the UN was pronounced disapproval of Taliban's refusal to accept any power-sharing arrangement, and a dogmatic adherence to arbitrary style of functioning. The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his report to the Security Council, had accused Taliban of violating human rights, pursuing discriminatory policies against women and not letting the aid groups carry on their humanitarian work.

As Ahmad Kamal urged, in vain though, the world community to recognise the Taliban as the de facto government in Afghanistan, the Security Council endorsed Kofi Annan's findings, and threatened the Taliban with unspecified sanctions if a ceasefire was not put in place and no accord was reached to resume an intra-Afghan dialogue, under the UN auspices and without delay and preconditions. To add insult to injury, the Taliban were also charged with sheltering international terrorists and facilitating drug trafficking. The US envoy, who set the pace for the tirade, alleged that Afghanistan-based terrorism had become a 'plague'. The UN also took note of the ethnic dimension of the Afghan conflict, and referred to the killing of Iranian diplomats and massacre of minority community during the seizure of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Some Taliban detractors may have had an axe to grind. For instance, the US belligerence was obviously prompted by the Osama bin Laden affair, and the Russians, who sponsored the UN resolution, have been fearful of Taliban's spillover effect in Central Asia. Nonetheless, the fact that all 15 members of the Security Council spoke with one voice to denounce the Taliban regime as a 'rogue', spoke volumes for the futility of championing its case before the world community.

Asserting, as the Pakistani ambassador did, that false alarms of imaginary threats were being raised to justify interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, was not a convincing logic. Nor was the alibi that censure of the Taliban was 'one-sided' good enough for Pakistan to distance itself from the UN resolution. Whatever the UN

resolution said, which incidentally was a watered-down version of the original, represented a broad international consensus conveyed to the Taliban time and again.

Whether it was his mandate, or he overdid the job, defending the Taliban a la Pakistan's UN envoy was a diplomatic blunder. What the world community thinks of the Taliban rule was comprehensively brought home by the UN debate. How would it see Pakistan-Taliban nexus is not hard to tell. We have no favourites in Afghanistan is what Islamabad has all along been saying. Yet it was deemed necessary to hold the fort for Taliban, earning in the process embarrassing isolation.

The Taliban can afford to adopt a couldn't-care-less attitude towards world opinion and stick to their self-proclaimed divine mission. But Pakistan has a high stake in being able to do business with the rest of the world, in particular the neighbours in the region. Are we prepared to dump the Kashmir campaign for which we have been going from pillar to post to mobilise international support? The suggestion may sound far-fetched, but the linkage is critical. Islamabad's proximity to diehard religious fanatics now in control in Kabul will have a significant bearing on international response to any cause sponsored by Pakistan.

**P**olitical pundits have said it is a little too late for Pakistan to disengage itself from the Taliban. It is as deeply involved in the Afghan power struggle as other major players such as Iran and Uzbekistan, official denials notwithstanding. As each Afghan faction has a foreign backer and the battlelines have been clearly drawn, Pakistan has little option but to do business with a friendly regime. To single out Pakistan for meddling in Afghan affairs, as Iran did following the rout of Northern Alliance in Mazar-i-Sharif, is patently unfair. Pakistan alone cannot be asked to stay away from the Afghan conflict when so many others have a finger in the pie.

Quite a few other arguments have also been given to justify support to the Taliban. To top the list is the 'Pukhtun' factor, which evokes fraternal sentiment on this side of the Durand Line, and is a crucial determinant in a pro-Taliban policy formulation.

The religious groups in Pakistan have an ideological motivation to closely identify themselves with the Taliban, who they see as the messengers of Islamic dispensation. Eulogising summary trials and public executions as necessary measures to deter evildoers, many of them have been pleading for emulating the Taliban model of governance. Hardcore religious fanatics have gone to the extent of saying that they would welcome a Taliban takeover in Pak-

istan, since the country's rulers were not sincere in enforcing Islamic laws. No wonder the Shariah Bill was seen as a pre-emptive move, more so because the Prime Minister chose to lobby for it exclusively in the tribal belt.

That the bulk of the Taliban is the product of Pakistani *madrassas* has prompted critics abroad to allege that the phenomenon was the brainchild of Pakistan's intelligence agencies. Whether the Taliban movement was an indigenous growth or sponsored by an external hand, it achieved phenomenal success by marginalising all the rival contenders for power in Afghanistan. And it may be legitimately argued, as the Pakistani Foreign Office does, that since the Taliban have extended their writ to most parts of the country and call the shots in Kabul, their recognition by Islamabad as legitimate Afghan government had no partisan motive.

Some critics have, however, asserted that it was done in 'indecent haste', without taking into consideration the international implications of Pakistan's initiative. Subsequent developments have confirmed that Pakistan gained no leverage whatsoever, while it has unnecessarily invited trouble on many fronts.

If all the neighbours in the region are displeased, particularly a friend like Iran, and Pakistan has come under fire in fraternal associations like the ECO, the Taliban connection could only be termed a liability. Even if one were to dismiss the UN censure of Taliban as the outcome of US manipulation, no alibi is good enough to account for the OIC's refusal to acknowledge the Taliban regime as the lawful Afghan government.

Islamabad has failed to accomplish anything worthwhile in its high-profile peace missions to Afghanistan, largely because of Taliban's refusal to participate in an intra-Afghan dialogue. Islamabad is officially committed to a negotiated settlement among all warring Afghan factions, leading to the formation of a broad-based coalition. But in case our so-called friends and allies in Afghanistan are not prepared to listen to us, why blame others for accusing the Taliban of arbitrariness and fanaticism?

What, in tangible terms, have we gained from identifying ourselves with the Taliban is the key question. Do we have any clout over Kabul to influence policies vital to our interests. Can we, for instance, persuade the Taliban to accommodate the ethnic and religious minority groups, and be a little more tolerant to women? We have, so far, either been unable to effectively put across the message, thereby exposing the limitation of our communication channel with Kabul, or we have been deliberately conniving at their pursuit of medieval despotism, which is indeed a far greater cause for concern than a foreign policy fiasco.

# Afghanistan's future under Taliban Fp 981218

**Fazal-ur-Rehman Afridi**

The Taliban have proved themselves to be an unrivalled force in Afghanistan following the humiliating defeat of Gen. Rashid Dostum in Mazar-i-Sharif. At present, they control 90 percent of Afghanistan and cying Panjsher Valley to establish their writ all across the country. Ahmed Shah Masood, the Lion of Panjsher, is using all his means to stop the onslaught and even trying desperately to recapture the lost territory. But the ground situation and statistics indicate that Masood will not be able to put up resistance for a long time because his forces are now tired of the long battle first against the Russians and now against their own brothers.

The Taliban under the administrative leadership of Mullah Rabbani and under the spiritual guidance of Mullah Umar are not in a mood to pay heed to anyone's demands for the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan. Taliban militia is an unstructured band of religious warriors who believe that if they succeeded they will become *Ghazi* and if they died in the way of Allah, they will be rewarded in the life hereafter.

These religious warriors are running the affairs of Afghanistan on the super structure of religion and it seems that they will be able to maintain their hold on power till the time they remain loyal to the commandment of their religion. After the weakening of their loyalty to religion and the war zeal, or the sudden death of their spiritual leader the very structure of the government will crumble down. The main reason behind this structure ruination would be the non-existence of a viable administrative machinery and power transferring mechanism in Afghanistan, which will once again lead the Afghan people to a long civil war.

Another possibility is that the Afghans are a very impatient nation. They don't give much time to their leaders to stay at the throne. At present, they are satisfied with the Taliban for bringing peace and security. Naturally after a long devastating war between external and internal forces the basic demand of the hour and main objective for the time being is preservation of life, provision of food and shelter. But, when these needs are somewhat met they multiply into other needs, wishes, wants and desires. It is at this point that the Taliban would be unable to fulfil the psychological needs like human development, self-esteem and self-actualisation, proper employment opportunities, economic prosperity, development of physical and human infras-

structure, provision of food and shelter, health and education and other facilities of modern age.

The Taliban would not be able to deliver these goods partially due to their strict interpretation and imposition of Shariat laws and partially due to their non-cooperation with the international community. They will not be able to improve the basic legal, political, administrative and constitutional set-ups. So, after the restoration of peace in Afghanistan, the people will find the Taliban militia to be useless, undesirable and will try to replace it with another set of skilled, highly qualified professional people who know how to handle internal and external affairs of the country.

When we look at the Afghan imbroglio from another angle, there are clear indications that Russia has again started consolidating its positions in the region after remaining dormant for about 8 year mainly due to its own political and financial troubles. Russian Federation is again in the great game to protect its interests in the region and play an effective and leading role, re-asserting itself as a strong power. Russia has succeeded in turning the Central Asian Republics (CARs) to its way of thinking by instilling the fear of Islamic fundamentalism in their minds. That's why they all have one voice against Taliban and its skirmishes with Taliban on Afghan borders send clear signals that Russia will not tolerate the export of the Taliban mode of Islam in the region.

In these circumstances, the Russian will use their all means to destabilise Taliban militia. On the other hand, India is also in the grip of fear of Taliban's support to Kashmiri freedom strug-

**Paying no heed to Pakistan's calls for a broad-based government in Afghanistan speak volumes for Taliban's gradual independence in decision-making.**

gle. The 15 per cent Muslims in India will also be affected by the Taliban style of militancy. The Taliban have a very soft corner for Kashmiri people. They may establish war-training camps for Kashmiris in Afghanistan and support them with men and material. For the freedom of Kashmir and disintegration of India on the pattern of the USSR.

If that happened, the disintegration of India would not be that peaceful and calm. So, Indians are also interested in keeping the Taliban engaged in the internal war by supporting the weak opposition alliances.

Iran has also amassed 250,000 troops along the borders with Afghanistan to warn them against the killing of Shia community in the country. This situation can escalate into bloody war between the two brotherly countries and can further fuel the traditional rivalries between Sunni and Shia communities in the whole region. This will be the most dangerous outcome of the Afghan volatile situation that should be avoided at any cost. Pakistan a strong supporter of the Taliban after being disappointed by the tough behaviour of the Taliban will at the end stop its cooperation with them, which may have dire political and economic consequences for them.

Similarly, signs indicate that Pakistan's control over the Taliban is also weakening. Cross border skirmishes with Pakistan's paramilitary troops and continuous intrusions into her border to arrest their culprits and giving no heed to Pakistan's calls for a broad-based government in Afghanistan and other requests, speak volumes for the Taliban's gradual independence in decision-making. They have become so audacious that they have completely ignored the friends like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan on different occasions and ultimately Pakistan will also stop helping and supporting. On the other hand, the regional powers like Iran, India and Russian Federation are also concerned about the die-hard radical Taliban-brand religious ideology and militancy. Therefore, this tripartite alliance of Iran, India and Russia may devise a three-pronged strategy for Afghanistan: (I) Provide arms and finances to the anti-Taliban alliance, (II) Exploit the multi-ethnicity of Afghans and (III) Create deep divisions and differences among the unorganised and unstructured, non-institutional structure of Taliban Militia.

Going deep into the composition of the Taliban, it is clear that they are pre-dominantly Pakhtuns with small number of other ethnic groups, Pakistanis and Arabs. Pakhtuns are famous for their passion of fighting. When they have no foreign enemy, they fight among themselves. When all the opposition forces are washed away from the scene, they may start fighting among themselves. The growing difference between Mullah Umar and Mullah Rabbani and small

unsuccessful revolts in different regions clearly indicates this mind-set of Pakhtun dominated Taliban. The conflict between Durrani and Ghilzai group of Pakhtuns in Taliban ranks will again plunge the country into chaos and anarchy.

Taliban's lack of tolerance and enforcement of its own interpretation of Shariat; denial of human rights; forcing men to grow beard; stopping women from working and getting education; their links with terrorism and smuggling narcotics and drugs; humiliation, harassment and killing the personnel of international organisations like (UN) will considerably harm their legitimacy as true representatives of Afghan people.

It is high time that Taliban and other warring factions saw that for how long will they continue to play with the lives of innocent Afghan people for power. They will have to think in terms of providing basic needs of Afghans inside Afghanistan and all those who are outside Afghanistan living as refugees and maltreated by the host countries. If Afghans want to maintain their traditional prestige and honour then they will have to stop hostility and establish a broad-based government with equal representation to all ethnic groups. This is the only solution for the war-ravaged, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society of Afghanistan.

## Taliban ban two Pakistani newspapers

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - The Taliban administration in Kabul and Jalalabad have imposed ban on the entry of some of the Pakistani newspapers to Afghanistan.

Reliable sources confided to The Frontier Post that the Intelligence Unit of Taliban in Jalalabad had issued a circular on December 8, 1998 wherein a ban had been imposed on the entry of some Peshawar-based Pakistani newspapers to Jalalabad and Kabul.

The Taliban officials, the sources said, had taken this action following the anti-Taliban reporting concerning the demonstrations which were held by Afghan students in Peshawar after American cruise missiles attacks on Afghanistan.

Those newspapers which have come under this action of Taliban included the Peshawar-based Pashto daily, *Wahdat* and a bilingual daily *Sahaar* being brought out by Afghans in Peshawar.

The Taliban had also imposed a ban on the entry of daily *Wahdat* to Jalalabad about eight months ago. This time they had declared the reading of *Wahdat* and *Sahaar* as illegal in Kabul also besides Jalalabad city.



# Taliban allow journalist to visit Mazar-i-Sharif

are generally satisfied now that the Taliban are in power in Mazar-i-Sharif though some complain about their strict laws. It said there aren't many Taliban on the streets and fewer young local men and Shiite Hazaras are now visible in the city. He quoted Balkh's provincial governor, Mulla Akhtar Mohammad Usmani as saying that the opposition were trying to create problems for the Taliban in the remote mountains of the province.

The reports said only the ICRC and Doctors Sans Frontiers were active in Mazar-i-Sharif and the hospitals lacked medicines. The Taliban health department head, Syed Amin Agha, and doctors both complained of insufficient medicines and urged for outside assistance to overcome the shortage.

**News Bureau Report 9/2/22**

**PESHAWAR:** The Taliban have finally allowed a journalist to visit Mazar-i-Sharif, which fell to them in August this year.

BBC's Kabul correspondent William Reeve, accompanied by his Afghan translator Mohammad Ismail, became the first journalist to enter Mazar-i-Sharif and report from it Friday. The Taliban had barred entry of the press to Northern Afghanistan after their spectacular military victories there in August-September. The move was widely criticised and termed an attempt by the Taliban to hide human rights violations by them.

In his first two despatches, William Reeve reported that people

## Pak Taliban demolish houses of murder accused

**News 981218**  
**Bureau Report**

**PESHAWAR:** The Pakistani Taliban in Orakzai Agency punished another three suspects in the murder case of a young man Thursday by burning houses of three more accused and imposing a fine of Rs 1.5 million on each of them.

A few days ago, the Tehrik-i-Tulaba had publicly executed the alleged murderer, Khial Ghaffar, for killing one Shandi Khan to grab his property. It had also burnt the houses of three other suspects and fined them Rs 1.5 million each.

Maulana Mohammad Rahmin, head of Tehrik-i-Tulaba in Orakzai Agency, told The News on phone from Khadezo village that their Taliban with the help of local tribesmen burnt the houses of suspects, Sultan, Omar Shah and Zarbat Sher. He said a fine of Rs 1.5 million each was also imposed on them. "Their houses were burnt and they were fined because they failed to appear before the Ulema Shoorra to defend themselves

against charges that they were involved in the conspiracy to eliminate the orphaned Shandi Khan. They could have escaped punishment had they appeared before the ulema and tribal elders," he explained.

The Maulana said six of the accused had gone into hiding. However, he said the burning of their houses and the heavy fine were enough punishment for them and even if they were caught now they would not be punished further.

Maulana Rahmin said nobody in the government had contacted them yet for publicly executing an alleged murderer. "We have no problem with the authorities. In fact, we are helping the government by taking action against criminals and maintaining peace in the tribal area," he said.

He clarified that his Tehrik-i-Tulaba in Orakzai Agency had no links with the Taliban in Afghanistan. "However, we are inspired by the Afghan Taliban and support their government and policies," he argued.

## Islamists reactivate training facilities in Afghanistan

**News 981222**

**By Ismail Khan**

**PESHAWAR:** Months after a hail of US cruise missiles hit suspected terrorist networks in Afghanistan's southern Khost province, intelligence and diplomatic sources said the organisations involved in imparting guerilla training to Islamic radicals have reactivated their operations.

"There is evidence to suggest that the Islamic radicals have reactivated their training facilities in Afghanistan," revealed an intelligence official. "In fact, they never ceased their operations. They merely moved them from one place to another," said intelligence and security officials who claimed that Harakatul Ansar which changed its name to Harakatul Mujahideen after it was branded a terrorist organisation by the US has relocated its camps deep in Khost, Jalalabad and Kabul. "They have abandoned Zawarah," said the intelligence official of the area which received dozens of guided cruise missiles in August last.

The report has also been confirmed by western diplomatic sources. Quoting source, diplomats said that the HUA recently invited a delegation of ulema from the NWFP

to visit their training facilities in Jalalabad and Kabul. "It doesn't take long to build the camps. All one needs is mud and stones to build the structure and there is plenty of it out there," recalled Bakht Zamin, commander of Al-Badr unit of Hezbul Mujahideen, a militant outfit of the Jamaat-i-Islami, fighting guerilla warfare in the Indian-held Kashmir. Zamin, a lawyer by education, said he had taken part in the construction of Al-Badr and Zawarah camps which were hit by a blitz of missiles.

Both intelligence as well as diplomatic sources speak of increased activities of Arab radicals in Kabul. One official quoting a reliable source said that Arabs had been seen concentrating in Jelarez in Maidan Shehr close to Kabul. These sources further said that radicals associated with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida organisation were making efforts to open a new training facility in Afghanistan's northern Kunduz province. "They are trying to make their new facilities in caves, apparently to escape missile attack," the source said.

Officials said there had been no let up in the number of people opting to join either Al-Qaida or the HUA. Security officials said that

Arabs of Middle Eastern and northern African origin were still travelling to Pakistan in transit to Afghanistan. They said that one Zainul Abideen alias Abu Zubaidda was operating as a conduit and representative of bin Laden in Pakistan. The 38-year-old bespectacled, tall Palestinian with a French-cut beard is widely believed to be the channel through whom men and money reaches Laden. "He is a shadowy character. We know that he exists but have never been able to track him down," admitted one security official.

Knowledgeable sources said that an increasing number of Arab radicals were travelling to Pakistan using Italian and French passports. In a raid on one of the safe houses in Peshawar's posh Hayatabad township, allegedly run by Abu Zubaidda, security agencies recovered 16 blank Italian passports. The passports, said the security officials, were stolen from Naples in Italy. An Arab arrested with a stolen Italian passport, along with a Bosnian, a Saudi and an Iraqi national, were bailed out and later fled across the border to Jalalabad. Cases against them are now pending in local courts.

In a similar raid, security offi-

cials, arrested Muhammad Abdul Ahid Basem Sheta in Peshawar. Sheta, said to be in his mid-thirties, had two Egyptian passports. Both were found to be forged. Officials said that three hand grenades and several detonators were recovered from his living room. Sheta refused to confess anything and tried to commit suicide with a string of his trouser in an interrogation cell. He is being tried under the explosives and anti-terrorist laws.

Intelligence officials pointed out that Sheta was planning to bomb the residence of a senior diplomat in Peshawar and that they had been tipped off of the possible terrorist attack by the foreign mission concerned. "We were given the information and developed it further," the officials said.

The security agencies are also looking for Saifuddin, a Tunisian, who is believed to be working for another group, called the Takfiris. The group believes that all Muslims living under the US sphere of influence are infidels and need to revert to Islam. In a raid on one of their safe houses, security officials recovered Iraqi passports and forged visa stickers of Pakistani high commission in London.



# Lack of planning, funds hamper Afghan reconstruction

Natson 981224

By Nafees Takkar

ISLAMABAD - Adjacent to the main gate of Kabul Continental Hotel there stands a young attendant in the small cabin to watch the movements and welcome the guests. He has a P-cap on his head. With a flowing Taliban style beard and western uniform, he presents a contrasting image of the old and new Afghanistan. In his cabin he has an electric heater to keep the biting cold at an arm's length. For switching off the light he would not use the button. Rather he will take out the bulb from its holder.

Inside the rooms of the hotel the system is not very bad. At least knob can help you switch on or off your room's lights. Electric heater and hot water can be provided to the guests soon after their entry into the room.

"Proper planning is the need of the hour to improve things," the hotel attendant cackles as he demonstrates how many people in Afghanistan pass current to the bulbs and bulbs to make light in their homes. His discontentment on the state of affairs is visible and is restless to see when Taliban would get rid of the war and initiate reconstruction of his war-torn country.

But he is not the only Afghan rueful about his motherland. In Kandahar, Ghazni, Kabul, Mehtarlam (capital of Laghman) and Jalalabad people are anxious for positive activities. They are not happy with the status quo and have started counting the masterstrokes of Taliban since they appeared on the Afghan canvas four years ago. "Peace and security," and then they stop when

you will ask them about the feats of Taliban rule. The two stunts are also well-crammed by Taliban and they will frequently refer to the 'amazing' peace they restored in Afghanistan of their predecessors-Jihadi groups.

But who will build the roads, schools and hospitals? The economy and agriculture are yet to attract the rulers. Jobs are not existing to accommodate the youth of the country. And the fire in the stomach is increasingly high.

The southern parts that came under

Taliban rule in late 1994 and early 1995 present little difference to the central and eastern parts of Afghanistan which were captured by Taliban in the mid of 1996. Both in southern, eastern and central parts the roads are still bumpy. The 110 kilometer-long road leading from Pak-Afghan border near Chaman to Kandahar made no progress in the last four years. It is still bumpy. And perhaps no wise doctor will advise his patient to travel on this road.

Worse is the condition of the road from Kandahar to Kabul which is about 600 kilometers long. A motor car will take about 20 hours to reach Kabul from Kandahar. Only for three to four hours a driver can find a stretch whereon he can drive at a speed of 60 to 75 kilometer per hour. For the rest of the journey the speedometer needle should not cross the figure of 35 or 40. If it raises, the car can develop a fault which then can hardly find a mechanic to be repaired by.

The busiest is the road between Kabul and Jalalabad which later leads to Torkham, the Pak-Afghan border. This road has few metalled stretches but the credit for that does not go to Taliban or

their predecessors. It is rather the failure of all the warring factions that could not destroy those few functional pieces of the road. A small portion of the road had been levelled in the recent months.

Those who frequently travel on these roads can not tolerate more desolator in the reconstruction of these roads. For them the first priority is the reconstruction of the roads even if Taliban had no money for making any breakthrough in the social sector. Nor they believe in the compulsions of Taliban they present for not allocating budgets for the rebuilding of the main roads between different towns.

Besides roads equally pathetic is Afghanistan's agriculture sector. The little progress agriculture made under the Taliban rule can only be recorded in Afghanistan's southern parts while rest of the areas remain as they have been.

Of the 90 per cent destroyed agriculture 70 per cent has been brought back to normalcy in Kandahar, Helmand and Zabul provinces, according to Taliban spokesman Maulvi Abdul Hayee Mutmain. He says Taliban distributed modern seeds which led to an increase in yields. Lack of fertilizers has led to a low fertility, however. To improve irrigation new canals have also been built and more land has been brought under cultivation, Governor of Kandahar Mullah Mohammad Hassan Rehmani says.

At present Afghanistan can boast of a miniscule small industry comprising units manufacturing plastic products, cement, soaps and biscuits.

Taliban can rightly claim tremendous progress in power generation and

its supply to consumers specially in major cities and towns. For instance Taliban have been able to provide electricity to consumers in a radius of 184 square kilometers in Kandahar. Similarly power has been restored to capital Kabul, Ghazni, Lashkargah, Herat, Jalalabad, Mehtarlam, Qillat and rural areas adjoining these cities. Likewise Taliban have plans to increase power generation of plants on the Kabul river.

Two of the major social sector spheres are still languishing in neglect in the four-year Taliban rule. With the exception of a very few, many hospitals are either in a destroyed state or in a shambles. Only those health centres are functional which have been set up by NGOs.

Schools are being built in Afghanistan's south, the region which was the first to fall to Taliban. In the south only boys schools are steadily being built while there are not institutions for girls. Kabul university has been opened up but again only for boys. Girls eager to learn go to homes in neighborhood for some private education.

Even if Taliban improve its industry, agriculture and the miserable social sector, it will be long years before they put into place a proper banking system. The official currency Afghani is continuously printed but no one knows against what it is valued, there are virtually no foreign exchange or gold reserves. This has led to a continuous decline of the Afghani against all foreign currencies. The result is a horrible inflation and soaring prices.

## FP 981224 Afghans fleeing northern areas accuse Taliban of torture

WASHINGTON (NNI) - Taliban atrocities coupled with natural calamities have resulted in the increased influx of the Afghan refugees from Afghanistan's northern and central parts to Pakistan, reports VOA.

Many Hazara families arrived from central Afghanistan have lodged behind the Qissa Khwani Bazaar in Peshawar. They wanted to proceed to Quetta or Iran.

After a brief stay in Kabul, these families leave for Pakistan. A resident of Sarchashma area in Siakhak Mohammad Ali in Peshawar said that he migrated due to the excesses of Taliban. He said that Taliban told them either to give them arms or money, which he did not have ei-

ther.

He alleged that he along with his family was forced to leave for Pakistan. He said that they were again looted at Torkham. Most of the refugees did not disclose their names fearing security for their relatives still living in Afghanistan.

An old man said Taliban would punish his relatives if he named them. He said he arrived in Peshawar after walking for two days along with his children.

In Peshawar too, he said, there was nobody to look after them and they were roaming about desperately. He said he even telephoned to Iran but from there too, Afghans were expelled.

In Pakistan, the refugees are

leading a miserable life as they neither have jobs nor money. One Hussain Ali from Wardag province said that Taliban deprived him of the money and belongings and now he was empty handed.

A number of Afghan widows who have lost their husbands in war have also accompanied the fresh refugees. A widow said she left Afghanistan to escape Taliban's atrocities. Excesses are not the only reason for the migration of these people. Natural calamities which hit their areas in spring and summer have also resulted in decreasing agricultural products in Hazarajat, which remained under 18 months economic siege, forcing the people to migrate.

(51)

# Osama urges Muslims to confront Americans, Britons

News 981226

CAIRO: The Muslim militant Osama bin Laden has urged Muslims to kill Americans and Britons for supporting their armed forces' attacks on Iraq, according to an interview with an Arabic newspaper.

"The British and the American people loudly declared their support for their leaders' decision to attack Iraq," Bin Laden said in Friday's edition of the newspaper Asharq al-Awsat.

This made it "the duty of Muslims to confront, fight and kill (Britons and Americans)," Bin Laden said. "And anything that can be taken from them by force is the rightful prize of Muslims."

The United States and Britain carried out airstrikes on Iraqi military and communications sites Dec 16-19 to punish Baghdad for its alleged obstruction of UN inspectors seeking evidence of its weapons of mass destruction.

The London-published newspaper said the interview with Bin Laden was conducted in the mountains of Helmand province, southern Afghanistan.

Washington accuses Bin Laden, a Saudi dissident, of masterminding the twin bombing of the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya on Aug 7.

The blasts killed 224 people, including 12 Americans. Thirteen days later the United States blasted Bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan with cruise missiles.

Bin Laden denied any involvement in the embassy bombings, but expressed his "admiration and support" for the attackers.

After the United States attacked Bin Laden's camps, the Taliban — the militia that controls 90 per cent of Afghanistan — announced that it



In this image taken from video broadcast Thursday, Osama bin Laden speaks during an interview at an undisclosed location in Afghanistan Wednesday. —AP photo

had imposed restrictions on Bin Laden, including barring him from giving press interviews.

Bin Laden told Asharq al-Awsat that while the Taliban had prohibited him from carrying out attacks on foreign countries, he continues to "guide (Muslims) toward holy war against Jews and Christians. This is a duty."

The interview was the second to be published with Bin Laden in two days. It was not immediately clear whether he was defying the Taliban's restrictions or whether they had been eased. A Taliban spokesman could not be reached for comment.

"Every day I indulge in my favourite hobby of horse-riding, rid-

ing more than 70 kilometres (40 miles) a day," Bin Laden told the newspaper.

The Pentagon put about such "strange rumours" in order to "reassure Americans by making them think their public enemy number one is about to die," he charged.

Earlier this month the Pentagon described as "interesting" intelligence reports that Bin Laden was ill and had been seen walking unsteadily in recent photographs.

The Saudi dissident again denied Washington's charge that he masterminded the embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in which 12 US nationals were killed.

Bin Laden denied having "any operational or financial link" with

Mamduh Mahmud Salim, a Sudanese national held in Washington on charges of being Bin Laden's principal arms supplier.

"(Mamduh Salim) is one of the best men I have ever met — he led prayers at Peshawar mosque for the Arab (volunteers) and also worked with the relief groups (in Afghanistan)," Bin Laden said.

"But he left Sudan for Germany more than four years ago," he said.

Mamduh Salim was extradited to the United States on Sunday after being arrested in Germany in September.

Bin Laden also denied any link with a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant Washington bombed in retaliation for the August bombing of its embassies.

"I didn't even know the name of the owner of this factory until I learnt it from media reports," he said.

Bin Laden insisted that he had no involvement whatsoever with the pharmaceutical industry while he was in Sudan before his departure for Afghanistan in 1996.

He also cast doubt on US charges that the bombed Sudanese plant was being used to produce precursors for chemical weapons.

"If it were producing chemical weapons, there would have been tens of thousands of casualties," he said.

The United States bombed it without the slightest proof because President (Bill Clinton) wanted to hide his misdeeds and resorted to massacring Muslims because in his eyes their blood is cheap."

Asharq al-Awsat carried no pictures of Bin Laden but said the interview was carried out face to face at his Afghan hideout.

It denied that the Saudi leader was based in Kandahar province, the stronghold of the Taliban, the Islamic militia which controls most of Afghanistan and has been strongly criticised by Washington for harbouring Bin Laden. — AP/AFP

## Osama embarks on large-scale business

FP 981228

F.P.-Maidan Service

PESHAWAR - The representatives of billionaire Saudi fugitive Osama bin Laden and the Taliban government have signed an agreement allowing the dissident to initiate large-scale businesses in Afghanistan, The Frontier Post learnt Sunday.

Details have it that the Afghanistan-based Osama has managed to take various agricultural farms on lease in Jalalabad, capital of Peshawar province, and the adjacent areas.

He has been allowed to export fruits from these farms to Gulf states using Peshawar as the transit route. The farms mostly produce olive, lemon, orange and pomegranate. Especially olive, which is in great demand in the Gulf states.

Osama is also interested in the export of olive, one of the

most expensive fruits in the Gulf countries, to the Middle East market.

According to a reliable source, before the Russian invasion, these farms employed about 10,000 people but now the major produce has only been wheat. Last year the wheat produced on these lands was only 70 tons as compared to this year's produce of 140 tons.

A reliable source said, the authorities were keeping the Osama deal in secret as the United States and other western countries, which had already placed Osama on the top



of their hit list, were creating hurdles for him. Despite the international pressure and sanctions, Osama's business is flourishing in the Islamic countries, the source said.

The source said the business office of Osama at Amariat Char, in the vicinity of Jalalabad, is being decorated

and one of the trusted friend of Osama, a Canadian national of Arab origin had been appointed to look after the business.

The Arab national holding

Canadian nationality has also spent some time in jail during the investigation into a bomb blast case at the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad some time back.

The Frontier Post learnt that Osama was running his vast business empire through scores of front men, some of whom were operating from Peshawar.

Osama is learnt to have financed several development projects in the areas controlled by his principal supporters, the Taliban.

Some of these projects have been already completed while others are in the various stages of completion.

Over the past one year, the billionaire Saudi dissident has emerged as the main financier of Taliban movement, which has been receiving scarce foreign assistance due to their isolation at the international level.

# Taliban move to curb timber smuggling

FF 981231

By AIMAL KHAN

**PESHAWAR** - The Taliban authorities have banned the forest-cutting all over Afghanistan following strong demand from the people.

Taliban sources confided to *The Frontier Post* here on Wednesday that supreme leader of the student militia Mullah Mohammad Omar Mujahid, through a special decree, had strictly banned the forest-cutting in the war-torn country.

The decree was issued after a delegation of Zazai tribal Pakhtoons held a meeting with the Taliban high command in Kandahar recent, during which they called upon the hardline militia to take concrete steps to check the brutal deforestation in Afghanistan.

One member of the delegation, Deen Mohammad Ghazi, told *The Frontier Post* that the timber smuggling had been controlled to a great extent following the Taliban's decree. Ghazi, who returned from Kandahar recently, said on his way back from the southwestern Afghan city he witnessed significant decrease in the transportation of timber.

He quoted governor Kunar as saying that in compliance with the

decree, forest-cutting had strictly been banned in areas under his control.

The transportation of already-cut and stored timber in Kunar has already been halted till further orders. It may be pointed out that Kunar is the most deforested area of Afghanistan which has a very limited forest covered area due to its semi-arid climate.

The western parts of Hindu Kush, in the provinces of Nooristan, Kunar, Laghman, Paktia and Nangrahar, are mostly covered by oaks, pines, and cedars forests.

Since the fall of Communist government in Afghanistan, these forests have been subjected to indiscriminate cutting by the local commanders. This ruthless falling of trees has denuded many once lush green mountains in these regions.

Due to geographical location of these forests, mainly situated close to the country's border with Pakistan, has led to the emergence of powerful Afghan-Pakistani timber smuggling rackets.

To make quick bucks from cross-border timber smuggling, the former Jehadi commanders in collusion with the Pakistani timber mafia, had unleashed a deforestation

campaign, which had reached catastrophic proportions.

Although the Taliban had imposed a ban on forest cutting soon after the fall of eastern provinces to them in September 1996, but the timber smuggling continued unabated throughout this period.

However, with the rise of student militia to power in eastern Afghanistan, the smuggling has been re-routed and now it is being transported to Karachi, the largest Pakistani timber market, via Kabul, Kandahar and Quetta and not directly through NWFP.

A sizable portion of the profit is now going into the pockets of some Taliban commanders due to re-routing of illegal cross-border timber trade. In the past the anti-Taliban commanders used to benefit from these windfall profits.

According to an authentic survey, in the eastern provinces, the area covered under forests was estimated at 210,000 hectare, of which 72 per cent was located in Kunar province alone.

By the time the smuggled timber reaches Karachi, its price multiplies by 25 times and when it reaches its final market, mainly Gulf states and Japan, it is sold at price 50 times higher than its cost back in Kunar, Afghanistan.

## Afghanistan to import gas from Turkmenistan

By AIMAL KHAN FF 981227

**PESHAWAR** - The Taliban government has signed an agreement with Turkmenistan on the import of 600 tonnes of liquified natural gas.

Afghan sources told *The Frontier Post* here Saturday that the agreement was recently signed by senior officials of the two governments and the Turkmen gas would be supplied to the energy-deficient areas of the war-battered country, which often faces serious fuel and food shortages, especially in the biting winter.

Trade relations between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan have registered an 11 per cent increase during the past one year despite the student militia government's near-international isolation.

Turkmenistan is the only country in the world after Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, with whom Taliban enjoy normal relations and are involved in a considerable two-way trade.

Taliban had also signed an agreement with the Turkmen government in September last on the import of petrol, diesel and jet fuel.

The first consignment of the fuel

arrived in Afghanistan through its Torghundi border town in the second week of this current month. Turkmenistan has been maintaining a low-profile cordial relations with Afghanistan ever since the rise of Taliban on the Afghan scene in 1996.

Afghanistan had, in the past, been totally dependent on fuel imports from Iran, but after the country's latest agreement with Turkmenistan, it will no more rely on that source.

Torghundi border town has, over the past few years, emerged as a bustling trade centre, especially after Iran stopped offering its Bander Abbas port facility for Afghan transit trade last year. The Iranian decision caused a 15 to 20 per cent slump in the Afghan transit trade.

Afghan traders used to import their goods through Banadar Abbas and Islam Qila while now they have switched over to Banadar Abbas-Turkmenistan-Torghundi (Afghanistan) route.

Interestingly, despite the fact that the cost of the import of goods

through Turkmenistan has doubled for Afghan traders, the two-way trade is still growing. In the past the freight cost of a 40 feet container from Bander Abbas to Afghanistan (via Islam Qila) was 2200 dollars, which has now doubled to \$ 4500 with the re-routing through Turkmenistan.

According to one estimate, more than 800 trailers and trucks cross over to Afghanistan or Turkmenistan every day.

Besides fuel, Afghanistan is also importing electricity, cloth, wheat, fertilizer and machinery from its Central Asian neighbour while its exports to Turkmenistan include rice, carpets and dry fruits. The electricity imported from Turkmenistan is being supplied to consumers in the Jauzjan province.

After Turkmenistan, another Central Asian country, Kazakhstan, is also very keen to improve trade relations with Afghanistan. Recently, a private Kazakh firm offered to sell wheat to Afghanistan at the rate of 166 \$ per metric ton. Talks are still going on and an agreement is well in sight.

Afghan sources said the Turkmenistan government was also considering to construct a bridge on Ammu Darya (Oxus river) so as to give its land-locked neighbour a more wider access to international markets. Afghanistan imports from Central Asia have traditionally been made through Uzbekistan, using Heratan bridge over Oxus.

However, after the fall of northern Afghanistan to Taliban in August this year, no trade has been carried out through Heratan as Uzbekistan has closed its border with its war-ravaged neighbour.

# Taliban's ban on music jeopardises Afghan heritage

News 990104

By Qasim Shah

**PESHAWAR:** Afghan singers and musicians living in Peshawar are deeply concerned over the extinction of their 200-year old cultural heritage as the puritanical Taliban government has imposed ban on music in Afghanistan.

Ban on music has resulted in the flight of musicians to neighbouring countries as they are fearing penalties from the Taliban after their takeover in Afghanistan.

"If you are a musician and Taliban found you they will certainly kill you," remarked an Afghan musician Said Jan who is now based in Dabgari Gardens in Peshawar. However, one of the Taliban officials in Peshawar denied any capital punishment for the musicians. He said, "if they refuse to abandon their profession despite our warnings we impose fines and confiscate their instruments".

In a survey conducted by The News, many Afghan musicians were found living in Pakistan against their wills as they are banned in Afghanistan. These Afghan musicians, most of whom are based in Peshawar, are living in a pathetic condition due to their low incomes.

The Afghan musicians living in Peshawar includes folk bands, pop groups and some famous Afghani singers.

A famous Afghani female singer, Naghma, feared the very existence music in the present circumstances. She said that Afghanistan traditionally kept the pure Pashtoon music alive but now as no music was allowed in Afghanistan, the musicians were compelled to stay in exile and "for earning bread they are compelled to choose other professions for themselves". Explaining the purity of Afghan music she said that Pushtoon music here in Frontier had accepted influence from Punjabi and other Pakistani local music. She said, "the Afghani music is free from all sorts of foreign influences and is still in its purist form but its very existence was now at stake."

Comments by Naghma were confirmed by other Afghan musicians also. Most of the bands and Afghan pop groups were of the opinion that ban on music in the Taliban-controlled areas had affected the Afghan music the most. One Afghan musician Faqir, based in Dabgari Gardens, Peshawar, said he didn't know whether music was Islamic or un-Islamic. "The only thing I know is that

it is my ancestral profession. As Taliban have banned it in Afghanistan, therefore, I have to play here in Pakistan to earn a livelihood."

According to the musicians Taliban have even banned music in refugees camps here in Pakistan, though Taliban have denied any such activity. An ageing Afghan musician Anwar said, "I want to go back like other people to live in my motherland but Taliban will never allow me." Taliban officials in Peshawar said there was no room for music in Islam. If these people wanted to go back to Afghanistan they had to abandon this un-Islamic practice.

The irony of the situation is that most of the Afghan refugees living here are fond of music and one can find this out in their weddings. They want to keep their traditional music alive but due to the ban on the music most of the musicians are living a miserable life. They can neither go back nor earn their livelihood here. In the process, the situation is getting worse for the traditionally rich Afghan music. It is a fact that Peshawar Television provides opportunities to Afghan singers but TV never allows Afghan instruments players and poets to be given coverage on TV.

# Influx of Afghan refugees continues unabated

Nation 990107

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** - The influx of Afghan refugees to the border cities of Pakistan continues unabated due to lack of food stuff, job opportunities and advent of biting winter in the war-ravaged Afghanistan.

"Hazara refugees have been arriving in large number from northern Afghanistan in Pakistan border areas of Peshawar and Quetta," reports a weekly update of United Nations Assistance for Afghanistan issued on Wednesday.

The Quetta-based sub office of UNHCR has provided a limited one-time assistance programme for the most vulnerable groups of the fresh arrivals. Over 150 families have so far been assisted through a local NGOs, the report informed. There is, however no mention of the level and kind of assistance provided to the fresh refugees being arrived in Peshawar. Peshawar is these days faced with severe flour shortage.

In central highlands of WFP distrib-

uted emergency winter wheat in most of the vulnerable areas of Hazarajat and distribution continued in Behsud I and II. It also distributed 2,000 tonnes of wheat and BP-5 biscuits in Panjao, Waras and Sharistan. Three tonnes of mixed food donated by Pakistan government were distributed among 42 families in Bamyan, the report mentioned.

The UNCHR resumed provision of winter relief for 9,000 vulnerable families in Kabul. About 1,000 women will directly benefit from the production of sweaters and clothing distribution, the report said, adding that about 10,000 people received health education on prevention and management of acute respiratory infections.

In eastern region the FAO crops dispatched 13 tonnes of mineral fertilizer for wheat seed multiplication programme, irrigated improved wheat seed demonstration plots in Agam district, recorded stand data of 5 sets of wheat yield trials and transplanted radish and turnips for seed production in

the Shesharhbagh research station in Nangrahar.

The report said that WFP released 62 tonnes of food for repatriation, sanitation and institutional feeding in southern region of Kandahar. The FAO crops also completed planting of 25 winter wheat crop farmer field demonstrations orchards/sites in Zabul province for the coming season.

The UNHCR Heart distributed tents, blankets, shoes and clothing to returnees from Iran and IDPs mostly from Eshkamesh, Imam Saheb, Dasht-a-Archi and Burka districts of Kunduz.

The update also reported the road mishap at Dushanba on the first day of the new year where in Bill Bergquist, a long time, UN staffer in Afghanistan, breathed his last. Bill held the post of senior humanitarian officer since November 1998.

The deceased started his involvement in Afghanistan as a peace corps volunteer in 1972, returned in 1990 and again in 1995 and also provided assistance to Somalia and Indonesia during his posting in Afghanistan.

## Nation 990106 Iran expels thousands of Afghan refugees

**KABUL (AFP)** - Iran has expelled more than 10,000 Afghan refugees over the past two weeks as part of a deportation campaign launched by the government, official Taliban sources said Tuesday.

The Iranian authorities have pushed groups including women and children into the bordering Afghan province of Nimroz, the sources said.

A batch of 1,000 people was the latest to cross into the provincial capital Zaranj city on Monday, they said.

"Since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan (December 19) 10,000 Afghan refugees have been deported from Iran to Nimroz province," Shariat weekly quoted Nimroz governor, Mulla Gul Ahmad Ashrafi as saying.

A spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said his office had also received reports of the deportation of 'quite a large number' of Afghan refugees by the Iranians.

# Have Taliban too failed to deliver the goods?

Nation 981222

Inside Afghanistan

From Nafees Tarkhar

second major city or town on Afghanistan will concede to these arguments. The rest are not happy. They will scorn at luxury Land Cruisers carrying Taliban leaders amid the crowded streets of Kandahar leaving a haze of dust for the passers-by.

In the markets, hundreds of farmers will show you their hands with signs of assiduity, but they will not be able to purchase cooking oil for frying the vegetables. The shopkeepers, hawkers and public transport owners complain of heavy taxes now imposed on them by Taliban. Their problems increase when at home they realize that their children cannot go to schools.

The prices of essential items are jumping up due to rise in the value of Pak rupee against the Afghani. In recent years more people have turned into beggars. And they can hardly forget the past of Taliban's supreme leader Ameerul Momineen, Mullah Muhammad Umar Mujahid. His present lifestyle is the focus of his private public debate. In Kandahar, Mullah Umar's contemporaries remember the days when he used to ride on an old bicycle. Many of them, maybe out of jealousy, now cannot tolerate seeing

Taliban's leader moving in a caravan of extravagance. His official residence and the lights on its walls at night time is also providing food for public censure. "Is this the way to spend the money from the Bait-ul-Mal?" is a common question one can hear from common people whose voice seldom finds ear.

This public disapproval of Taliban comes from Kandahar-the city which provided base to Taliban Islamic Movement on November 4, 1994. In Kabul and areas of non-Pashtoons such criticism has little meaning. For they are natural opponents of Taliban. But now the critics are Pashtoons who once welcomed Taliban to their towns by raising white flags on the roofs of their homes. Their reproach has weight since on them depends the success or failure of Taliban Movement.

Those who are not a part of the Taliban administration are also not happy with the Islamic system introduced by Taliban. The few educated people don't see the welfare aspect of an Islamic system in the one promulgated by the Taliban. "Their (Taliban) system has punishments but no rewards," remarks an Afghani who finished his studies in engineering in the

former East Germany. The focus on capital punishments is meant to terrorise the commoners, he argues. Why are they not spending money on the reconstruction of roads, opening of schools and improvement in the general life standard, he asks.

And these are not easy tasks for the ruling Taliban Movement. The fulfilment of the public demands needs money and strong will. The two requirements, money and will, are clearly visible on the war front and in the life style of Taliban leaders but they are conspicuous by their absence in the public sector.

Taliban's spokesman based in Kandahar Maulvi Abdul Hayee Muthmainn has his own argument. He disagrees with his people. "The system is quite new and time will be required for people to adjust themselves with the new rules and regulations," he says. The fighting in the north has put a drain on our exchequer and therefore allocation of budget for other projects has suffered, is the main argument presented by Muthmainn.

He says prices have never been increased rather Afghani has been reduced against Pakistani rupee. He

claims that still many items are cheaper in Afghanistan compared to the prices in the neighbouring countries. "People pay in thousands to buy one kilo of tomatoes and hence they are psychologically under the impression of paying more money for little items," he contends while ruling out the increase in prices.

Taliban's spokesman says complaints against the imposition of taxes is not correct. He says the phenomenon of tax is new as Afghans did not pay taxes in the past. "But it is now necessary for the running of the government," he maintains.

His arguments, however, lose weight against the people's claims when they see among themselves the growing prosperity of Taliban leaders and plenty of luxury cars in their possession. Their objections to the scheme of things is a part of natural process. They first need peace and security which was, in a sense, achieved by Taliban. Now they demand reconstruction of the country, jobs, education for their children, freedom of speech and a real welfare state to play. These are tough objectives and are beyond the approach of the present Taliban leaders' mind-set.

## WFP re-opens subsidised bakeries in Afghanistan

22-05-990107

From Miangul Naeem

PESHAWAR - The World Food Programme re-opened its subsidised bakeries in the eastern Jalalabad city of Afghanistan on Wednesday to meet the needs of the city's increasingly vulnerable population of more than one-half million residents.

These subsidised bakeries were closed down more than four months back when a mob attacked the WFP office in Jalalabad in a reaction to the US cruise missile attacks on a training camps at Khost. A UN observer was also killed in Kabul during the violent attacks of Afghan on Kabul-based UN office.

"WFP's Vulnerability and Analysis mapping team surveyed the situation in Jalalabad in December, to investigate reports that a 33 per cent bread price-hike was straining the endurance of the city's poorest residents. WFP officials believe the wheat supply to

the eastern Afghan city may have shrunk due in part to tightened controls over the smuggling of wheat across the Pakistan border," a WFP Press release issued here said.

Presently the approximately 20 million population of NWFP are going through worst kind of flour crises in the month of Ramadan. And due to this the government has imposed ban on free supply of flour and wheat to the tribal belt to plug the leakages/smuggling to Afghanistan. The gravity of the flour shortage has reached to such an alarming level that a person was killed during a cross firing between a dealer and buyer. The use of baton charge by police and long queues of the people to the atta shops have become routine events these days.

The atta-shortage in NWFP has direct effects on Afghanistan which is mainly dependent upon the food routs from tribal belt and NWFP.

The WFP also found growing food insecurity due to the absence of WFP food for work projects which have been suspended since the US strikes in August, 1998.

The attacks led to the closure of all the UN and other international bodies' offices in Afghanistan. Even all the foreigners specially white-people were evacuated from NWFP due to the increasing risk to their lives.

In addition, the onset of winter has swelled Afghan cities' normal population with migrants from the country-side seeking work. All the 87 Jalalabad bakeries which sell Afghan bread or nan at highly subsidised rates to 150,000 pre-selected beneficiaries, were operating normally today. ACBAR, the Peshawar-based NGOs umbrella group, is monitoring the operations while the NGO corps international is administering the bakeries. WFP runs some 200 similar bakeries in Kabul, the capital of the Afghanistan.

55



# Pakistan suspected of backing Osama

Nation 990108

By Syed Talat Hussain

ISLAMABAD—The Sharif government is having a hard time convincing its neighbours and other important capitals of the world that it does not have much influence left with the Taliban and that it can not facilitate ouster of Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan.

Wide-ranging background interviews with Islamabad-based diplomatic community clearly indicates that the world continues to believe that Pakistan is backing the Taliban hook, line and sinker and some of its institutions also have links with Osama bin Laden.

"The support continues through linkages established over year. We believe that this support is much more than moral and diplomatic. It is also material and financial," said a western diplomat.

More seriously, diplomatic sources also say that while they believe the Sharif government's assurances that it has got nothing to do with Osama bin Laden, they suspect that part of the Pakistani establishment is involved with the man who is dubbed by Washington as one of the world's most dreaded terrorists.

"The Prime Minister and his close confidants have done much to clear

the suspicions that they are backing Osama. Many responsible federal ministers have assured us in private that Pakistan will never be a party to his activities and that it condemns terrorism. But at the same time they also tell us that there are 'wheels within wheels' which they can not stop and which

continue to have truck with Osama bin Laden besides rendering valuable material support to the Taliban," said diplomat sources.

They also said that they have enough independent evidence to support the Sharif government's claim that "its hands are tied on Afghanistan".

"There is a vast network in your intelligence community with does not listen to any government and which operates on its own. It is definitely happening in the case of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden as well. We know it," sources said.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that the government is planning to streamline the operations of the establishment dealing with Afghanistan.

"We have heard such reports and there is some truth in them. We hope there is, because in these circumstances when Pakistan needs the support and the backing of the world on major diplomatic and economic issues, Islamabad can not afford to run counter to world public opinion about the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. If there are elements in the policy implementation process which work independent of official policy then it is dangerous for your country," sources said.

"The Sharif government is on the right track, but it should match its claim of disassociating itself with Osama and Taliban with more substantive action."

## Taliban seek help from Afghan traders

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - A two-member high-level delegation of Taliban government has arrived in Peshawar in an effort to raise funds for their cash-starved government. Afghan sources confided to *The Frontier Post* Saturday that the delegation comprising Abdur Rehman Zahid, a secretary in the Afghan government and Muslim Haqqani, secretary ministry of Haj and Auqaf, held a meeting with Peshawar-based Afghan traders and businessmen at the office of Sahr Gul Kochai. The Afghan officials informed their well-off fellow countrymen that Afghanistan was facing serious economic crisis due to which price hike and misery was haunting the man on street in the war-torn country. The officials urged the Afghan traders to help the government in Kabul financially. Sources said the delegation was expected to visit Quetta as well in an effort to generate finances for the Taliban government.

## Emergency food delivery to central Afghanistan

Nation 990108

Concentrating on the most vulnerable mainly the handless and female-headed households, WFP officers warned 'that without food aid, up to 160,000 people and run out of food during this winter.

Due to recurrent fighting, the US air strikes, the evacuation of US staff, the theft of WFP wheat stock in the area, the difficulties in securing clearances from Taliban authorities, WFP had to delay the food distribution well into the weeks when snow would normally preclude access to the Hazarajat.

However, winter arrived in Afghanistan and Pakistan only this week, allowing more than 4,000 tons of wheat and high-energy biscuits to be distributed to local committees of elders and community representatives.

Local commanders in some locations tried to take over the distribution with threats that attacks were imminent, according to team leader Bari. However the WFP staff persisted until all deliveries were in the hands of pre-selected beneficiaries.

"This has been a real achievement on the part of our national staff and our NGO partners," said WFP regional manager Broniek Szynalski. "We feel confident now that thousands of families who were at risk will survive the winter and restart their lives in spring after months, if not years, of deprivation." The non-government organizations OXFAM, Shuhada and Mcdera assisted WFP national staff in conducting the distribution at points in the provinces of Ghazni, Uruzgan, Wardag and Ghor.

WFP Afghanistan is getting a new country director, McMichael Sackett, who will arrive in Islamabad next week. Sackett, from Australia, has been Regional Manager of WFP in Nairobi.

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Just as the first snows closed roads in the Hazarajat region of Central Afghanistan, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has completed its three-week-long delivery of emergency winter food aid to more than 120,000 people who were facing a winter of extreme hunger and poverty.

A statement issued Thursday says with the evacuation of UN international staff from Afghanistan since August, WFP officials in neighbouring Pakistan coordinated the complex food distribution, led by national staff officers Abdul Bari and A.K. Naimi, to 19 remote areas in Afghanistan's least developed heartland.

Although fighting took place in the town of Bamiyan and some tension persists in the town of Yakawlang, the transition was otherwise relatively peaceful, according to a WFP team, which traveled the region in November.

The Taliban takeover meant the end of the blockade, which had closed traditional trading routes, which the Hazarajat people depended upon for survival. The WFP team also found that most people displaced by the fighting were returning home.

During the past summer, WFP's vulnerability analysis and mapping teams conducted hundreds of interviews with Hazarajat residents to produce an analysis of household food economy and the area's future food security. The teams determined that even with the improved access to markets, thousands of people had sold livestock and assets during the 18-month long blockade.

Also, the annual wheat crop in the region was afflicted with rust, and for the second year in a row, produced less than half the normal harvest.

# Emergency food aid for Afghan people

Nation 990108

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** - Just as the first snows closed roads in the Hazarajat region of Central Afghanistan, the United Nations World Food Programme has completed its three-week-long delivery of emergency winter food aid to more than 120,000 people who were facing a winter of extreme hunger and poverty.

With UN international staff evacuated from Afghanistan since August, WFP officials in neighbouring Pakistan coordinated the complex food distribution, lead by national staff officers Abdul Bari and A.K. Najmi, to 19 remote areas in Afghanistan's least developed heartland.

The Hazarajat region had been controlled by opposition forces until September, when the Taleban, who hold the major part of Afghanistan, swept

through the region of some 1.2 million people. although fighting took place in the town of Bamyan and some tension persists in the town of Yakawlang, the transition was otherwise relatively peaceful, according to a WFP team which traveled the region in November. The Taliban takeover meant the end of the blockade which had closed traditional trading roads which the Hazarajat people depended upon for survival. The WFP team also found that most people displaced by the fighting were returning home.

During the past summer, WFP's Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping teams conducted hundreds of interviews with Hazarajat residents to produce an analysis of household food economy and the area's future food security. The teams determined that

even with the improved access to markets, thousands of people had sold livestock and assets during the 18-month blockade. Also, the annual wheat crop in the region was afflicted with rust, and for the second year in a row, produced less than half the normal harvest.

Concentrating on the most vulnerable - mainly the landless and female-headed households, VAM officers warned that without food aid, up to 160,000 people could run out of food during this winter.

Due to recurrent fighting, the August US air strikes, the evacuation of UN staff, the theft of more than 1,000 tons of WFP wheat stocks in the area and the difficulties in securing clearances from Taleban authorities, WFP had to delay the food distribution well into the weeks when snow would normally preclude access to the Hazarajat.

## FP 990109 Taliban claim foiling uprising plot

By AIMAL KHAN

**PESHAWAR** - The Taliban student militia has claimed to have foiled an opposition plot to create disturbances in northern Afghanistan simultaneously and arrested 30 alleged culprits besides recovering a huge quantity of sophisticated arms.

Afghan sources said here Friday that some of the arrested people were shifted to Kandahar, the Taliban headquarters located in southwestern Afghanistan, for further interrogation and more arrests were expected in this regard.

Pro-Taliban Pakistani sources claimed that the student militia had recently unearthed a plot, reportedly hatched by Tajik warlord Ahmad Shah Masoud at the behest of his foreign supporters to create disturbances in the north.

The Masoud-led opposition had planned to stage simultaneous mass armed uprisings against the hardline militia in the northern provinces of Balkh, Sheberghan, Faryab, Jauzjan and Sur-i-Pul.

For this purpose they had secretly started smuggling arms and

ammunition and a huge amount of money to purchase the loyalties of local commanders and finance the uprisings there.

The seized arms and money were smuggled from Panjsher, Masoud's stronghold in Kapisa province, and were meant for further distribution among the remaining forces of Shiite Hizb-i-Wahdat, Uzbek warlord Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum and Gen. Abdul Malik, who were in hiding in the far-flung mountainous areas of Faryab, Sheberghan and Sur-i-Pul provinces.

the sources said soon after receiving the information, the Taliban authorities conducted several raids in Balkh, Faryab and Sor-i-Pul and recovered huge quantity of arms and ammunitions from the opposition hide-outs.

The arms and ammunitions seized from these areas by the Taliban included 10,265 rocket launchers, Klashnikovs, heavy and light ammunition, shells, mines etc.

In Faryab alone, they captured about 5 billion afgani along with arms.

## FP 990110 Teheran agrees to repatriate Afghan DPs

**ISLAMABAD (NNI)** - The Islamabad-based UN Coordinator Erick De Mul has not confirmed the reports about expulsion of Afghan refugees from Iran and said Teheran has agreed to the voluntary repatriation of the refugees.

De Mul, who led a three-member delegation to Iran, said on his arrival in Islamabad that Iranian officials have agreed in principle that the return of Afghan refugees to their country should be voluntary.

Taliban Information Minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi had claimed last week that Iran had expelled 10 thousand refugees who had arrived in the border province of Nimroz. Taliban had also protested to Iran on the expulsion of the Afghan refugees.

The UN team discussed with the Iranian officials the future of the two million Afghan refugees who are residing in Iran. Representatives from the UN World Food Programme and the UN refugee's agency accompanied Mull.

De Mul said Iran wants repatriation of the refugees because the country's economy is suffering from reduction of oil prices. Unemployment is on the rise and the ministry dealing with Afghan refugees 'is under tremendous pressure to solve the problem.

He said the United Nations has offered to help but it can do much as the UN international staff was out of Afghanistan. Foreign staff was withdrawn in August last in the wake of US missile attack on Afghanistan.

The UN coordinator said during talks with the officials of

Iranian Foreign Ministry his team discussed the relentless civil war. He said Iran had opposed to military solution to Afghan crisis. Iran was hopeful that Afghan groups will come together and find ways and means to establish a representative government.

In November and December, some 12,000 Afghans who were refugees in Iran returned to Afghanistan with the help of the UN. But, UN senior officials wanted to engage the Iranian foreign ministry about what they intend to do with the practically two million Afghans who live in Iran.

The UN officials say the impetus for the visit came from the UN special envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, who heads the UN's Afghan political mission.

The mission was charged with finding a solution to the 10-year Afghan civil war.

UN special envoy Brahimi regularly makes trips to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and all the neighbouring countries when he is trying to further the peace process in Afghanistan. So he has urged the humanitarian and of the UN involves Iran in their planning as well.

Brahimi last visited the region in December. He is holding consultations with the regional countries about the proposed meeting of the 'six plus two' group in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent. Uzbekistan is one of the 'six-plus-two group' made up of Afghanistan's six neighbours along with Russia and the United States.

# Afghan opposition captures township

News 990117

Kabul blamed for bombing residential areas

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's opposition alliance said on Saturday it had taken a strategic township in the central province of Bamiyan as it accused the ruling Taliban of bombing residential areas in the northeast.

The opposition forces took the Yakaulang township on Saturday morning after a few hours of fighting, pouring into it from surrounding hills, opposition spokesman, Dr Abdullah, told Reuters.

There was no independent confirmation of Abdullah's report, which said repeated Taliban attacks to recapture Yakaulang failed while the militia air raids killed 11 civilians in the area. Yakaulang lies on a route to the west of Bamiyan city that links it to mountainous Hazarajat region taken by the Taliban last September.

Central Afghanistan is the bastion of minority Shia Muslims, whose Hezb-i-Wahdat faction had ruled the region before hundreds of its fighters

fled to the mountains in September. Abdullah said the Taliban jet fighters dropped several bombs both on civilian and military sites in opposition-held areas of the northeastern province of Takhar, which borders Tajikistan. "In this (Muslim) fasting month, they not only bomb military sites at the fronts but also residential areas," he said.

"There were no casualties from the bombing of the military areas, but we have not received any reports on the raids on the civilian areas in the north yet," said Abdullah, who is a spokesman for commander Ahmad Shah Masud. The Taliban said it had carried out air attacks only on military bases run by the opposition.

Both sides were engaged in clashes on Tuesday to the north of Kabul, and Abdullah accused the Taliban of massing a "large number of troops to launch a major attack in a few days". —Reuters

## 6 Taliban punished with amputations for robbery

News 990116

KABUL: Six fighters from the ruling Taliban movement had their right hands and left feet cut off on Friday for highway robbery.

Two other people were also punished on Friday. A tank pushed over a stone wall on a man for sodomy while a boy, who recently had his right hand removed for theft, had his left hand removed for the same crime.

Witnesses said more than 20,000

people watched the mass punishment at Kabul's sports stadium.

The punishments by Taliban military tribunals were carried out after approval by the movement's supreme leader Mullah Omar, Taliban sources said. The victims were dragged out of a car that had tinted glass and forced to lie down on the ground. Their hands and legs were chained and eyes covered with cloth. —Reuters

# Afghan children battling for survival

By FIDA HUSSAIN

PESHAWAR - My father had died in the 20 years long Afghan war and I have to shoulder the responsibility to earn bread for my seven family members.

This was what a 13 years old Afghan refugee namely said Humayun said who was busy selling plastic bags in the Bara Market Peshawar Cantt. He added that though it is impossible for me to meet the family requirements in earning just a meagre amount varies between Rs 30 and 50 but still it is better to continue with as compared to begging the profession adopted by many Afghan children during their difficult survival.

It is a fact that after the influx of Afghan refugees into the country the socio-economic set up over here has tremendously changed. With their advent to this land the most affected area proved to be Peshawar valley where more than 75 per cent of about 3 million Afghan refugees are residing. Having nothing in their hands at the time of migration, the Afghan refugees started adopting every profession in the local market. In this context the Afghan refugee children are in no way lagging behind their elders.

Today everyone can observe Afghan children working petty jobs like selling plastic bags, towels, garments, and cloth, boot polishing, working at hotels, garbage collectors, cleaning the tainted glasses of cars and vehicles and begging in streets etc.

On the one hand the influx of Afghan refugees has contributed much in decreasing the labourers wages however on the other it had resulted in unemployment spree in our locality.

Though engaged in petty jobs the Afghan refugees has managed to cope with their livelihood problems but on the contrary created a lot of problems for the local poor people because they find it difficult to get work at reasonable pay.

To know exactly the reasons behind the rampant rise in the child working in the local markets an expert on economic affairs said to this scribe, "Today the local markets has been occupied by the Afghan traders and they have, so far, been able to dominate the business here". Basically, he said, there were two classes among the Afghan nationals at the migration time i.e. one with enormous resources and the other with empty pockets and starved stomachs. The former have started investing its capital in the local market while the latter began to do manual work as it found no alternative way to earn bread for their children.

Because of well off outfits and flourishing business the wealthy class groomed and made fortune in a short time leaving apart the rest of their compatriots to bear the vagaries of hard and tuff life away from here. Thus in this way the empty handed Afghan

refugees for dearth of job facilities started adapting petty jobs. Their children also joined them to make both hands meet. He maintained that most of these children had their fathers died, crippled or disabled in the Afghan war.

He argued that the local market provides sufficient opportunities for the working children as they are available at very cheap rate and can do all sort of work and can be handled in much easier way.

Regarding the adjustment of Afghan refugees in the local environment Dr. Tanzil Agha, director of a Peshawar based NGO said that the refugees were becoming an integral part of the local population as 50 per cent of the Afghan had been able to procure Pakistani Identity cards in connivance with local registration officers. Socially these refugees, she said, contracted marriages with local people. It was, she feared becoming a constant threat for the province which is already running short of resources and

was dependant on the federal government for funds to meets its requirements.

However, in case with these Afghan working children, they are earning their bread by judiciously exploiting the opportunities available in the local market which are not being treated in the same way by the local people.

Though one can not justify to deprive or stop these small children from working which is indispensable for their survival, yet still their education is the main concern which has halted resulting in multiply illiterates in the future.

Responding to a question a working Afghan child at Bara Market said, "Why should I get education when I know that I will do the same even after getting education." In the same breath he said about their return to home. "Yes I will go back to Afghan if Pakistan stops interfering in the internal affairs of our country". Can you give me that guarantee? he asked.

# Assassinations of Afghan nationals increase alarmingly

News 990119

By our correspondent

PESHAWAR: There has been a marked upsurge in the assassinations and attacks on Afghan political and military figures in the recent times in the NWFP, casting an overall bad impact on an already bad law and order situation.

The last week killing of the son, wife and servant of a former mujahideen commander, Abdul Haq who at one time served as Kabul's police chief during the mujahideen government, has brought into focus the intra-Afghan disputes which, have increasingly been settled on Pakistani soil.

Though both, Abdul Haq, who now runs his own business in Dubai as well as the NWFP police chief, Syed Kamal Shah argued that it would be premature to derive a conclusion and attribute the killings to political or personal vendetta before investigating the case, the incident nonetheless has heightened the sense of insecurity among the former mujahideen as well as communist figures in the NWFP.

These killings have also brought to fore several dimensions of the intra-Afghan feuds and rivalry. The victims, for instance, have ostensibly been either former mujahideen commanders or former officials of the communist regime. Even the Afghans living in Pakistan have noticed the increase in attacks and assassinations on personalities associated with one faction or another.

Significantly, very few and rarely have the crime incidents involving Afghan nationals been reported to the police. Senior police officials admit that the Afghans prefer to settle the score themselves rather than leaving it to the police to investigate and apprehend the culprits. As it occurred to the police, in most cases, the victim's family knows who the perpetrator of the crime were. "The Pukhtoons have certain traditions. One is revenge; And they wait for years for an opportunity to present itself and enable them to settle their score", said an Afghan journalist.

In fact, the assassination of Afghan mujahideen commanders had begun soon after the Taliban took

control of much of Afghanistan. The commanders who once drove in expensive four wheelers and accompanied by armed guards with the permission of their Pakistani sponsors, had fallen from grace, once their services were no longer required.

The first to fall, among the prominent mujahideen commanders was commander Fazle Haq Mujahid, a Corps Commander of Jalalabad associated with Hikmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami. He was shot dead in Hayatabad about a year and a half ago along with Engineer Abdullah, another top mujahideen commander. This was followed by another high profile murder of Engineer Faiz Muhammad in Shamshatu Afghan refugee camp about the same time.

Former communist officials who had taken refuge in Pakistan after the fall of president Najibullah in April 1992, also did not escape the vendetta. Gen Nazar Muhammad, who was a defence minister during Babrak Karmal regime and had defected to the mujahideen, was shot dead in Quetta. He was running a grocery store in the Balochistan capital.

## FP 990118 Taliban accused of drug trafficking

TEHRAN (NNI) - Tajik President Emamali Rakhmanov has accused Taliban of involvement in drug trafficking and expressed concern over growing smuggling of narcotics from Afghanistan, reports Radio Teheran. Addressing a conference on Narcotics in Central Asia, he said, that nearly one ton narcotic is being smuggled to Tajikistan daily. He said that nearly two thousand tons of narcotics has been dumped in Afghanistan along Tajik border and can be smuggled abroad via Tajikistan.

## 6 killed as Taliban clash with villagers

News 990122

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Six persons were reportedly killed and four sustained injuries in a clash involving Taliban soldiers and villagers in Gurbaz area bordering Pakistan in Khost province in southern Afghanistan.

Eyewitnesses who reached Miranshah, headquarters of North Waziristan agency, said the clash took place when the Taliban tried to stop villagers from betting during an egg-breaking competition on the occasion of Eidul Fitr.

They argued it was un-Islamic but the youngsters who were enjoying themselves said it was their traditional pastime since ages. First there was a brawl, then blows were exchanged and stones were thrown at each other.

Finding themselves outnumbered, the Taliban are reported to have rushed to Khost town and requested reinforcements. They are said to have come in about eight pick-up trucks, heavily armed and bent on revenge.

The Gurbaz tribesmen were also ready, having taken up positions in the mountains. Fighting ensued as the two sides fired at each other with heavy arms. A rocket-launcher is said to have hit the house of one

Muzaffar Khan in Kondi village, killing two persons and injuring two children.

Six persons, including three children, two women and a man, were reportedly killed in Kondi village due to Taliban firing. Four villagers, including three men and a woman, were wounded and were transported across the Pak-Afghan border to Miranshah for medical treatment.

The wounded persons accused the Taliban of mercilessly pounding their Kondi village with heavy arms. The Taliban casualties in the clash could not be immediately known.

All efforts to get a Taliban version of the incident failed as most Taliban officials were unavailable due to Eidul Fitr holidays.

One of the persons who was killed in the clash was said to be a nephew of Shah Khan Gurbaz, a known military commander who is fighting for the Taliban and was made incharge of the Al-Badr camps inhabited by Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden and his men until they were attacked with US missiles on August 20 last year.

Meanwhile, local Gurbaz tribal elders managed a ceasefire until Friday following the clash to enable

themselves to resolve the dispute between the Gurbaz tribe and the Taliban.

Pakistani ulema from North Waziristan agency have also gone to Khost to try and mediate a truce and settle the land ownership dispute.

## FP 990118 Opposition cuts major Taliban supply route

KABUL (AFP) - Anti-Taliban forces have severed a major supply route to Mazar-i-Sharif amid heavy fighting in northwest of Afghanistan, independent sources said Sunday.

They said the highway which runs from Maimana in Faryab province through Jauzjan and into Balkh, has been cut north of Sheerin Tagab.

"Opposition forces have captured Sheerin Tagab and we have reports from the people in the area that the fighting has been heavy," one foreign aid source said.

He said foreign aid workers, including staff from Medicine Sans Frontiere (MSF) were operating in the area.

Taliban forces captured Mazar-i-Sharif from the opposition forces in August.

Independent sources were unable to confirm reports that Yawkawlang in central Afghanistan's Bamiyan province has been captured by opposition commander, Ahmad Shah Masood.

# Anti-Taliban troops move northwards

## Tension mounts in Afghan province

Nation 990122

KABUL (AFP) - Anti-Taliban forces have escalated fighting in far northwest Afghanistan and partially shut down a strategic supply route which stems from Iran, independent sources said Thursday.

The sources said the small town of Quaramqol in Faryab province has come under attack and it was believed that forces once loyal to communist General Abdul Rashid Dostam had joined in the fighting staged by the anti-Taliban alliance.

Quaramqol lies on the Morghab Road which extends to Taliban-held Shibarghan in neighbouring Jauzjan province and then eastwards into Balkh and the provincial capital of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Morghab Road is part of a network which skirts Afghanistan's western borders and joins the Islam Qalah Highway from Herat in the south where cross-border trade with Iran is responsible for up to 40 per cent of the country's supplies, including food.

Sources said about 100 kilometres of highway remains shut in the northwest after opposition troops seized Sheerin Tagab in Faryab province five days ago before capturing outlying villages.

"The road is firmly shut, there is no traffic going through at all," one western source told AFP.

Sources said they could not confirm speculation in Kabul that the Taliban-controlled provincial city of Maimana had been captured by forces led by ethnic Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Maimana lies about 40 kilometres south of Sheerin Tagab "and there is no information coming through from that part at all," the western source said.

However, it was understood that former Dostam commanders based in Maimana had joined Masood in the fighting along Morghab Road.

Dostam, a communist who supported the 1979-89 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, once headed the ethnic Uzbek militia which controlled six provinces in the northwest until he was ousted by internal brawling in 1996.

No comment was available from Taliban officials.

One western military source said that securing Sheerin Tagab had always been the opposition's focus because the town astride supply routes to Shibarghan and Mazar-i-Sharif.

He said the Taliban's grip on the town had been weak while other sources said locals had been hoarding weapons in area in the event of an uprising. "I'm of the view that Sheerin Tagab and severing the supply route from Herat was always the objective and anything else has been opportunistic, the anti-Taliban gained the momentum and have kept going," the military source said.

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - A controversy has arisen between the Taliban and the Gurbaz tribe of Khost province in Afghanistan, following an armed clash. The tribesmen are demanding the arrest and subsequent hanging of the culprits involved in the killing of 6 villagers, reportedly killed by the student militia on Monday last.

An armed clash took place between the Taliban troops and local tribesmen when the hard-line militia, in a bid to impose its strict Islamic laws, tried to stop the villagers from betting on traditional egg-breaking competition during the Eid celebrations in Gurbaz area in southern Afghan province of Khost, bordering Pakistan.

Terming it un-Islamic, like words between the Taliban troops and locals over the game resulted

in an armed clash, leaving six persons, including three children, two women and a man killed and four injured, whereas the student militia's casualties were not known.

After the intervention of local Ulema and tribal elders, a temporary cease-fire was reached between the locals and Taliban but the situation was still very tense in the area. The bloody incident invited the anger of the powerful Gurbaz tribesmen who are strong supporters of the Taliban movement.

If the Taliban failed to resolve their problems with the locals, it could lead to a dangerous situation for their rule in Khost and the adjoining areas, Afghan analyst here believed.

A jirga, comprising Taliban representatives and the local chieftains remained inconclusive till the filing of this report.

# Foreign aid groups drifting back to Afghanistan

News 990122

KABUL: Foreign aid organisations are drifting back to Afghanistan after last year's exodus which left Afghans to fend for themselves amid a crippling civil war.

Expatriate staff from about 20 non-government organisations (NGOs) have returned to Kabul as the ruling Taliban militia has moved to resolve a dispute over the location of their offices and residences.

MedAir, Care, Medicins Sans Frontieres, PacTec, Shelter Now International, German Agro Action, ACTED, Orphans Refugees and Aid are among those to have re-established a presence.

However, David Thomson, project director at Swiss-based MedAir, said Taliban security guarantees remain a stumbling block and that these stem mainly from last year's evacuation of foreign staff.

NGOs began leaving Afghanistan

last July after they defied a Taliban order to shift to a dilapidated compound that used to house a polytechnic institute.

An exodus of United Nations staff followed the shooting death of a UN officer by agitated locals in response to the US missile attacks on alleged terrorist camps in the Afghan province of Khost on August 20.

Those camps were allegedly operated by Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden who has been blamed for the August 7 bombings of two US embassies in East Africa that killed 224 people.

The current focus for NGOs was "serious warnings" — primarily from diplomats in Washington and London — that foreign aid workers risked becoming targets for Islamic fundamentalists.

"We have no choice but to treat these warnings seriously," Thomson

said. "There are still the same risks associated with a country in civil conflict but now there's the extra possibility of a fundamentalist group targeting expats," he added.

Thomson said the Taliban want the NGOs back and have gone to great lengths to allay security fears for workers who once ensured impoverished Afghans received clean water, food, sanitation and basic health care. "There is a way forward but we're treading on new ground," Thomson said.

Taliban authorities say 20 NGOs have agreed to set up offices at the soon-to-be renovated polytechnic on the outskirts of Kabul.

And in anticipation of further returns, California-based PacTec, which specialises in transporting NGO staff between dangerous assignments, has opened shop in Kabul.

Director of local flight operations

David Brooks said the non-profit group was gearing up for an increase in passenger numbers between Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan.

"We're already seeing an increase in NGO personnel coming into the country and we expect this trend to continue as long there's no fighting within Kabul itself," he said.

"At the moment there are fewer than 100 people in Afghanistan but those numbers could easily double within the next four months."

The Taliban regime remains at war with forces loyal to Commander Ahmad Shah Masood with frontlines just 15 kilometres to the north of Kabul.

Fighting has been sporadically heavy, leading to speculation that Masood could launch an offensive on Kabul this year, and push the frontlines into the Afghan capital.—AFP



# UN assistance to Afghanistan continues

**PESHAWAR (APP)** - Despite political challenges confronting gender programmes in Afghanistan, the UN Coordinator's office-working out of Pakistan, is moving forward on a number of fronts.

According to press release of the United Nations Assistance for Afghanistan, a New Gender Coordinator Unit (GCU) has been set up within the PEACE Initiative Programme (unit membership will be extended to all UN agencies in the near future), to formulate gender policy jointly with other agencies, and to implement it together with the recommendations of the 1997 inter agency Gender Mission, GCU will formulate guidelines for gender mainstreaming, setting realistic objectives for gender activities, working with partners on pilot projects, and establishing minimum standards for best practices. Besides ongoing training for unit members, the GCU has obtained support from the Nordic Fund to plan a training for UN staff on gender sensitization and mainstreaming, and on human rights and gender equity issues in delivering development assistance in the Afghanistan context.

The Senior Human Rights Advisor, Ms. Norah Niland, has recently taken up her functions in the office of the UN Coordinator. The Senior Gender Advisor is due to arrive in early February.

Under the auspices of a Multi-Agency Technical Co-ordination Committee for health, a two day meeting was held in Peshawar last week. Participants from MoPH, UNICEF, WHO and relevant NGOs prioritized their interventions for 1999. This initiative roots its origin in the Common Programming approach and follow up the thematic groups deliberations leading to the 1999 UN Consolidated Appeal.

Each agency is expected to outline geographic areas of focus and activities envisaged. Specific inputs will also be outlined to pool resources and avoid duplication.

Components of the integrated water, Sanitation and hygiene education and their linkage with other sectors were discussed in a joint UNICEF/ Rural Rehabilitation Department (RRD) meeting with the local social committee in Dehsabz

district in Kabul. The community agreed to contribute in the planning, implementing and monitoring processes of projects.

Over twenty (20) female and male participants attended a three day training/orientation programme

on hygiene education and social mobilization, conducted by UNICEF.

During the Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) campaign in Kabul nearly 10,000 people received messages on different aspects of the ARI.

## Taliban contact Uzbek govt for power supply

and supplying the same to Zaranj city in Farah province. However, following deterioration in Iranian relations, the former stopped the supply of electricity. Taliban are also negotiating with the Iranian authorities for the restoration of power supply, but so far these have not been successful.

Turkmenistan is also supplying nine megawatts of electricity to the Afghan border town of Torkhundi for which the Taliban administration is paying its Central Asian neighbour 3000 US dollar per month.

**NNI adds:** Taliban have sharply reacted to the AFP report regarding Afghan opposition's victory in northern Afghanistan terming it false and baseless, reports Radio Shariat.

Quoting an official of the Defence Ministry, the agency reports that complete calm and peace prevails in northern Afghanistan and no clash or fighting has taken place there during past few days.

He termed such reports as propaganda campaign aims at boosting and strengthening the morale of demoralized Afghan opposition. He said that there was nothing to be worried about as the opponents had paid huge amounts to their commanders to create law and order situation during Eid days in different areas. But they did not succeed in achieving their nefarious designs.

power supply on the plea that since the Afghan government had failed to clear its arrears on the how overdue power bill, therefore it had no option but to suspend its supply.

The sources said that Afghan traders were also pressing the Taliban rulers to take up the issue of re-opening the Herat port along with restoration of power supply with the Uzbek government. In this connection, a delegation of Afghan traders, comprising predominantly of ethnic Uzbeks, recently held meetings with the senior officials of the Taliban government in Kabul.

According to Peshawar-based Sahara News Agency, the Taliban administration had also taken up the re-opening of Herat port along with the restoration of power supply. It said the student militia had even communicated its willingness to pay for the electricity Afghanistan would import from its Central Asian neighbour.

It may be pointed out that Afghanistan also produces a considerable amount of electricity locally. Its power house are located at Kajake Dam in Helmand province produces 150-200 MW of electricity, Naghloo Dam near Kabul 100 MW, Sarobi Dam in Nangarhar province 100 MW and Darwanta Dam near Jalalabad 75 MW.

Till recently, Afghanistan was also importing electricity from Iran

**By AIMAL KHAN**  
**PESHAWAR** - The Taliban administration has established contacts with the Uzbekistan government for the revival of bilateral trade and restoration of power supply to the war-torn country's northern region.

According to reliable Afghan sources, a senior official of the Afghan Ministry of Water and Power Mulla Mohammad Esa had taken up suspension of electricity supply to the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif with the Uzbekistan government a few days back.

It may be recalled that Uzbekistan cut off electricity supply to the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, which is also capital of the Balkh province, earlier this month. The Central Asian country had since long been supplying 23 megawatts of electricity to Mazar-i-Sharif and its surrounding areas to support ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum. However, after the fall of Mazar-i-Sharif to the hardline student militia the Uzbek authorities cut down the power supply to the Afghan region, once bastion of the anti-Taliban opposition, to 11 MW and ultimately completely stopped its supply.

The residents of Mazar have been facing severe hardships due to the cutoff. Uzbekistan cut off the

# UN plan to confront Taliban on women's issues

News 990124

By Anwar Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations has set up a Gender Coordinating Unit for Afghanistan, indicating that it is ready to confront the country's Taliban rulers who oppose all outside support for Afghan women.

The unit will work under the UN Coordinator's office for Afghanistan "to formulate gender policy jointly with other agencies," says a UN spokesman.

He said, "despite the political challenges confronting gender programmes in Afghanistan, the UN was moving forward on a number of fronts."

All UN agencies will be asked to join the unit and they will also help formulate a gender policy for Afghanistan. The policy will be implemented together with the recommendations of the 1997 inter-agency gender mission which submitted a number of proposals for improving the status of women in Afghanistan. Aware of the Taliban sensitivities on the issue, the United Nations is approaching the problem very cautiously. Even the programme's main objectives have been hidden behind official jargons like "gender mainstreaming, gender projects and establishing minimum standards for best practices".

The GCU will formulate guidelines for the programme and help in "setting realistic objectives for gen-

der activities", said an official UN document introducing the unit.

According to this document, the GCU will train the UN staff on "gender sensitisation and mainstreaming, and on human rights and gender equity issues in delivering development assistance in Afghanistan".

A human rights advisor, Norah Niland, has recently taken up her functions in the office of the UN Coordinator and a gender advisor is coming in early February. The office runs its programme for Afghanistan from Islamabad.

But diplomatic observers in Islamabad say that even this "soft-ap-proach" can lead to a confrontation between the United Nations and the Taliban who have serious disagreements over the issue.

The Taliban, who appeared on the scene in 1994 and seized Kabul two years later, have implemented their own version of Shariah in Afghanistan which allows little freedom to women. They have prevented Afghan women from going out for education or work. They do not allow male doctors to see female patients and insist that all Muslim women — Afghan or foreigners — should be accompanied by close male relatives when going out.

Their policies have had a devastating impact on a country with hundreds of thousands of war widows who worked to support their families.

## 62 killed in fierce Afghan fighting

News 990125

Masud claims capturing over 400 Taliban: militia commander switches sides

KABUL: More than 400 Taliban troops have been captured and 62 soldiers from both sides killed as fighting escalated in northern Afghanistan after a key militia commander defected, an opposition spokesman said Sunday.

Anti-Taliban alliance spokesman Abdullah said 38 Taliban militia troops were killed in the last two days by forces loyal to ethnic Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Masud in northwest Faryab province.

Another 350 Taliban were captured in the same province. A further 12 opposition troops were killed by the Taliban and another 28 wounded in the fighting around the Faryab town of Sheerin Tagab after commander Makhtome sided with Masud, he said. "He (Makhtome) is an ethnic Uzbek commander and has been working with the Taliban for several years but he switched sides the day before yesterday (on Friday)," Abdullah told AFP by satellite phone from India.

Faryab and its main highways, which link with the northern cities of Shibarghan and Mazar-i-Sharif, has

been the site of numerous clashes over the last 10 days.

Abdullah said fighting was continuing north of Sheerin Tagab along Morghab Road, while Masud's forces were also moving south towards the provincial centre of Maimana. This section of the road remained closed. "Our troops are in Kotah Pass overlooking Maimana. This is just three kilometres from Maimana itself," Abdullah said. However, he added the Taliban were preparing a counter attack in Faryab province, with troops deployment from Shibarghan in neighbouring Jauzjan province. "They are trying to reach Maimana from Shibarghan and have mobilised a force towards Sheerin Tagab but they have not advanced too far," he said. "We also captured 200 horses which were being used to ferry the troops of Taliban and their supplies in the area."

Independent sources have confirmed Masud holds Sheerin Tagab, but separate confirmation of the casualty figures and the situation in Maimana was not immediately available. A Taliban spokesman was not available for comment.

In an official Radio Shariat broad-

cast on Friday night, the Taliban claimed Masud had offered money to northern commanders as an inducement to change sides.

Abdullah claimed another 60 Taliban had been imprisoned and a further 12 killed during a recent separate uprising at Shore Tepah in Balkh province near the border of Uzbekistan. "The uprising was staged by local ethnic Turkmens and the district has been liberated for the moment," he said.

Abdullah added the usually harsh weather at this time of year had been restricted to rain, allowing the fighting to continue in the north. However, moderate snowfalls in and around Kabul had resulted in a lull in hostilities along frontlines just north

of the Afghan capital. —AFP

Reuters adds: There was no independent confirmation of Abdullah's claim or Taliban confirmation.

"I have no information. I don't know about the fighting, whether it continues or has erupted at all," Taliban Information Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi told Reuters.

The fighting coincides with new UN Security Council appeals for an end to the political, ethnic and religious bloodshed which has snarled the impoverished state for years.

Other opposition sources said that Masud's fighters had so far failed to cut the Taliban supply line to its northern outposts, which it seized from anti-Taliban forces in a lightning summer offensive. Independent sources have confirmed the fighting in Faryab but details of which side held the upper hand were not available.

# Taliban-style movement launched in Hangu district

People warned against use of dish antennas, TV sets and drugs

News 990128  
By Ayesha Shaheen

**PESHAWAR:** Influenced by the Taliban government in Afghanistan and Islamisation campaign by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, yet another movement Tehrik-e-Taliban Zargari, was launched Wednesday in the sectarian-ripped Hangu district for implementation of Shariah laws.

Patron of Jamiat-ul-Uloom al-Islamia Zargari, Syed Hazrat Hussain Jalali has been unanimously chosen as chief of the movement which has been tasked to collect dish antennas, TV sets and drugs to be publicly burnt on coming Sunday. However, the district administration expressed ignorance about the formation of the new movement but said a part of Hangu district, Zargari, was a de facto tribal area inhabited by Alikhel tribesmen from Orakzai Agency.

A committee comprising religious leaders and tribal elders was constituted by Hazrat Hussain Jalali to devise strategy for the implementation of Qur'aan and Sunnah. Focusing on the removal of 'prone sources' of social evils (TV, dish antennas etc) from the society, the committee has warned the locals of dire consequences, like burning of homes, if they found such gadgets during house-to-house search by their armed force after Sunday or if someone 'created hindrance in the implementation of Shariah'. "We are

going to burn all sorts of drugs and electronic gadgets of entertainment on the coming Sunday," said Hazrat Hussain in a telephonic interview with The News Wednesday. After that the tehrik would implement other Islamic laws like 'Qisas' and 'Hadd', he added.

Hazrat Hussain, an influential spiritual leader of the tribal belt, asked for co-operation and support of PML government to their movement. "It is the government's job that we are doing on our own," he said. "Our organisation has nothing to do with politics, it is a religious movement for purging the society of social evils," he claimed.

He said that the Islamic laws chalked out by their movement was an extension of the movement introduced by Akhunnzada Muhammad Aslam Farooqi in Mamoza area three years back and will operate in four villages of Hangu district namely Kai, Chaptrinaryab, Zargari and Shanawri. Closure of shops for 'Jumma' prayer and the hoisting of white flags at various places in Dabori, Mushtimela and Khaderaimela in the adjacent Orakzai Agency has already been in practice due to the Aslam Farooqi's tehrik.

Vowing to fight against all odds created either by the authorities or the locals, Jalali dispelled the impression that it would add fuel to the pre-

vailing sectarianism in Hangu district. "Various sects in Islam are not new, what our scholars need to do is to sit down and sort out their differences," he said. This, he said, was the only solution to the increasing sectarian tension in the province.

Hussain who considers himself indebted to Taliban Islamic government said that he would follow into their footsteps in all respects. He said that they would allow girls to get primary education to enable them to distinguish between 'halal' (what is allowed by Islam) and 'haram' (what is forbidden in Islam). The rest of the education, he said, was "useless".

When asked about the status of Islamic renaissance, he said that development of a nation was not determined by the standards formulated by the non-Muslims. "We want to progress as ordained by Islam and not by the West," he added. Hazrat Hussain Jalali, who is adamant to extend his movement to other areas of the country, said that other cities in Pakistan could succumb to the influence of daring reformations introduced by the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

The political authorities were, however, not worried about this development. "This is not a serious issue as the steps taken by them are already in vogue in the tribal area were within the purview of the existing laws," an administration official remarked.

## Amputated feet removed from Kabul streets

FB  
990122

**KABUL (AFP)** - The amputated left feet of six Taliban soldiers convicted of highway robbery have been removed from trees where they were left hanging as a warning against crime, residents said Tuesday.

The feet had been taken off the trees around Kabul in order not to tarnish the Eid al-Fitr Festival, which marks the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, locals said.

The feet were strung up last Friday after the six Taliban soldiers had their left feet and right hands chopped off at a packed soccer stadium after being convicted of robbery. "We think it was meant as a warning that the Taliban will not tolerate crime or dissention from within its own ranks," a resident said.

"But it made me feel sick. I don't think we have ever seen

such a sight before," he added.

The militia announced Tuesday it would release 56 criminals from jails in the south-west province of Herat as a gesture of goodwill amid the Eid celebrations.

The Taliban official radio quoted director for the High Court of Herat Luatfullah Karimi as saying the released prisoners must obey Shariah law to continue to enjoy their freedom.

The religious militia has imposed what it says is the purest form of Islamic law over the 80 percent of the country which it controls.

This includes the shunning of western fashions, male beards must be at least one fist length long, women must be covered from head to toe when in public while photos, alcohol and music are banned.

## Uzbeks suspend power supply to Mazar-i-Sharif

Nation 990122

**KABUL (AFP)** - Uzbekistan has cut off electric supply to Afghanistan's major northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif controlled by the Taliban Islamic militia, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Tuesday.

The suspension came earlier this month following a disagreement over the terms of an old deal under which Uzbekistan had been selling 20 megawatt to the border city, the Pakistan-based information service said.

The report, which could not be independently confirmed immediately, said residents of the provincial capital were facing severe hardship due to the cut-off.

Mazar-i-Sharif fell in the middle of the last year to the Taliban militia, which controls around 80 per cent of Afghanistan.

# Afghan opposition forms military council

New 990126

By Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: Forces opposed to the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan have launched a unified military council to wage a full scale war against their arch rival across the war-ravaged country in the upcoming spring season.

Radio Tehran quoting Ahmad Shah Masood said the new council, called the supreme military council or shura-i-aali nizami, includes factions of the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat, Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbaddin Hekmatyar and Ittehad-i-Islami of Prof Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf.

It, however, gave no word about Junbush-i-Milli of former Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rashid Dostum. Masood said the decision to form the military council had been made at a meeting of these groups at his Punsjher stronghold to the north of the Afghan capital, Kabul. "We discussed the causes which led to the loss of territory and felt the need for a unified command", Masood told the radio's Dari language broadcast in an interview.

Masood, who has been named as the supreme commander of the nascent military council, said the opposition forces would launch a full

scale war against the Taliban soon after the winter and during the spring season somewhere in March. "I'm grateful for the trust the allies have put in me", he said. Spring, unfortunately, has always been the fighting season during the over two-decades of internecine war in Afghanistan.

He said that the new council has representation from all the previous mujahideen factions including the eastern shura which ruled the four provinces of Nangrahar, Kunar, Laghman and Nooristan. For the first time, he said, the Pukhtun areas would also stage uprising against the Taliban.

Those who attended the meeting, according to the broadcast, included Mustafa Kazmi, now head of the Akbari faction of Hezb-i-Wahdat, replacing Akbari who has since joined hands with the Taliban, Irfani of Khalili's faction of Hezb-i-Wahdat and Wahidullah Saboun, intelligence chief of Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami besides Ahmad Shah Masood.

The opposition, it may be mentioned, in recent days and weeks have been able to score some important successes in the north of Afghanistan which the Taliban claim was a strategic withdrawal on their part.

## Taliban arrest killers of Pakistani tribesmen

News 990128

By Behroz Khan

the traditional egg breaking competition by the tribesmen on the Eid day by terming the practice anti-Islamic.

Taliban leadership was under pressure from the Gurbaz tribesmen and they had even declared a rebellion against the students militia if justice was not done to them.

The Taliban had announced five-day official mourning over the death of the tribesmen which indicated that provincial leadership of the religious militia did not back the action taken by their soldiers. "The whole of Afghanistan is in mourning since Taliban took over," remarked an Afghan pleading anonymity.

However, Taliban leadership is yet to place the responsibility on the provost of Nangarhar Medical College, Mullah Ayub and his brother for the killing of a student of the college and injuring four others in Jalalabad last month.

PESHAWAR: Following the directives of Mullah Muhammad Omar, Taliban soldiers on Wednesday arrested the six alleged killers of the Gurbaz tribesmen in Khost province of Afghanistan to be tried under Islamic laws.

A Taliban spokesman informed that all the six persons arrested in the Borikhel killings belong to the local Taliban ranks and have been handed over to the Shariat court for trial. The orders to arrest the alleged killers were issued from Kandahar two days ago after a delegation of the Gurbaz tribesmen visited the headquarters of the students militia.

Six people including two women were killed in the clash between the tribesmen and Taliban militia when they quarrelled over an egg breaking competition. The Taliban objected to

## UN team in Kabul to check security

Nation 990205

KABUL (AFP) - A four-member delegation from the United Nations arrived in Kabul early Thursday morning, marking the UN's first official visit to the Afghan capital since August last year.

The delegation met ruling Taliban authorities at the airport but declined to comment on talks scheduled with the Islamic militia.

Local sources say the talks could pave the way for the UN's full return to Afghanistan later this month or in early March.

"It's simply a technical mission to check out the security conditions and progress on the investigations into the deaths of UN staff killed in 1998," a UN spokeswoman said.

She said a full return would depend 'on how the Taliban can satisfy this team and probably others.'

The United Nations and most foreign aid workers were evacuated from Afghanistan following the August 20 US missile strike on suspected terrorist bases in the eastern Afghan province of Khost.

A UN officer was fatally shot by angry locals protesting the US action against bases which Washington says were operated by Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

The US has also posted a five million dollar reward for bin Laden's arrest.

NNI adds: UN Secretary-General's special emissary on the Afghan issue Lakhdar Brahimi will undertake a visit to the region later this month for talks on

the Afghan crisis.

Brahimi is expected to visit Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russian and Central Asian states in continuation of his efforts for restoration of peace in the war-ravaged Afghanistan besides Pakistan, UN sources said on Thursday.

The proposed meeting of so-called Six plus Two Group in Uzbekistan will also come up for discussion in the talks of the UN official.

Afghanistan's six immediate neighbours - Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, China, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - formed the group along with the US and Russia under the aegis of the UN.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif chaired a high-level meeting Monday in Lahore, which reviewed regional situation with special reference to the Afghan issue.

Officials said the meeting observed that Pakistan's Afghan policy was sound and Islamabad would continue to promote peace efforts in the strife-torn country in collaboration with the neighbouring countries. Referring to the proposed meeting of Six plus Two group in Tashkent, the officials said some ideas had been floated which were under consideration in the concerned capitals.

Brahimi will also meet representatives of the Taliban militia, which control more than two-thirds of Afghanistan, and leaders of the anti-Taliban alliance during his forthcoming visit to the region.

## UN team reaches Kabul after six months

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# Taliban and Hollywood

Nation 990205

**T**he indomitable Taliban can be accused of a lot of things, but women's lib is not one of them. Ever since they appeared on the Afghan scene in a rather dramatic way, they have steadily built up a solid reputation of being ill at ease in the company of the fairer sex. This problems-complex if you may has led them to take some un-moderate steps like closing girls' schools, banning women from the workplace and clamping various other imaginative curbs on the right of women. All this of course has been done in the name of Islam, their Islam. The results have been two-fold: first, the Afghan women are being put to the greatest test in their nation's history and second, the international community (especially the western kind) has discovered an issue which they can scream about to their heart's content.

The latest on this front is a big event being planned by Hollywood to raise voice against the "gender apartheid" being practised by the Taliban in Afghanistan. In a report published in a Karachi daily, the New York correspondent Masood Haider has given the following information about this event.

"Mavis Leno, wife of NBC talk show host Jay Leno, and Linda Bloodworth, creator of hit sitcoms like 'Murphy Brown', are planning a big event on March 29 in Los Angeles at the Directors Guild immediately after the Academy Awards Ceremony, to focus world's attention on the plight of Afghani women. Joining them are superstars of Hollywood like Melanie Griffith and her mother Tippi Hendren, Kathy Bates, Angelica Houston, Alfred Woodard, Carol Burnett and her daughter, a TV producer, Dorothy Rodham, mother of first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Whoopi Goldberg and the list is growing. President Clinton and CNN's Christine Amanpour will address the gathering on video and superstar Lionel Richie has written a song dedicated to the Afghan women. The Voice of America and Radio Free Europe will broadcast the event world over."

What impact will this and other such events have on the Taliban and on the world in general? As far as the Taliban are concerned, one can

safely assume that they are not going to let such "infidel propaganda" dilute their zeal and fervour. In any case, Taliban are said to have developed a dislike for TVs and thus dismantle them with all the force at their command whenever their eyes befall on a set. Given this state of antipathy towards the idiot box, there are slim chances that the Academy Awards and the anti-Taliban event which will follow it, will find large scale viewership in Afghanistan. There are of course chances that some of the more privileged mullas may have access to TVs which can catch the Hollywood extravaganza and these mullas may be directed by their superiors to "monitor" the event for official purposes. But these mullas, one is confident, will not allow their hearts of steel to melt when faced with sultry Hollywood damsels (even

though on screen and not in the flesh-God have mercy on them. Taliban that is).

And this is just the beginning. As the tales of Taliban's gender apartheid spread

across the world and acquire mythical proportions, the outrage continues to increase. In the process, the image of Muslims in general is being dragged through the mud. This would not have been so if the non-Muslim world was well aware of Islam and what it actually stands for. Since this is not so and the west in general remains an ignorant and gullible lot easily susceptible to stereotypes (at least they share something with the Taliban) the anti-Taliban salvos are hitting Muslims all over. According to a report, some fanatic Christian fundamentalist groups in the United States are posting all kinds of vicious propaganda against Muslims on the internet, pegging it on the Taliban and their attitudes towards women. These "Soldiers of Christ" who are essentially religious nuts, say that all Muslim men beat their wives as a matter of faith and therefore all "civilized" people across the world, and especially Muslim women, should rise up against Muslim men. This type of vicious fundu propaganda by Christian whackos is being fuelled by reports of Taliban's new, imaginative and ingenuous policies to cage women. Can somebody stop them?



## Presstalk

By Fahd Husain

## Taliban resolve 'egg-knocking' dispute

990208

**KABUL:** A deadly dispute which erupted after Afghanistan's Taliban tried temporarily to ban a traditional "egg-knocking" game has been settled, the Islamic militia's official radio said Sunday.

It said six people were killed three weeks ago in the clash between the militia and tribesmen in a southern frontier area.

Radio Shariat said a team sent by the Taliban's supreme leader Mohammad Omar had now settled the dispute and secured the continued support of the influential tribes for the Taliban administration.

The clash in the Gurbuz district of Khost region on the Pakistan border erupted after tribesmen defied the militia's order not to engage in the traditional game while celebrating the Eidul Fitr festival. The trouble in the district "was just an accident", the radio quoted the delegation chief, Information Minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi, as saying. Muttaqi said the dispute was solved through a tribal jirga (council) after the Taliban administration showed a "proper reaction".

A tribal chieftain was quoted by the radio as saying that the Gurbuz tribesmen would continue to support the Taliban. The hardline militia, which controls about 80 per cent of Afghanistan, has imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic Shariah law.

"Tokhm-Jangi" or egg-breaking is a traditional game practised all over Afghanistan on religious and other festivals. Basketfuls of boiled and dyed eggs are taken to local parks and resorts. Two players choose one or several eggs after gently knocking them against their teeth to test the hardness. Then they knock the point of one egg against the other until one cracks. The owner of the cracked egg loses the game and the eggs.—AFP



# Taliban restrict Osama's movement

News 990217

## US accused of seeking pretext to use force

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban Wednesday bowed to British and US pressure and isolated Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, banning him from accepting visitors or having outside contact, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

"Osama bin Laden has been disallowed to meet any visitors or other people," the Pakistan-based private information service said quoting a decree.

Related report issued by the office of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

All communication equipment including his telephone and radio had been withdrawn, AIP reported. "Osama Bin Laden no longer has any facilities with him to communicate with anyone," it said quoting a Taliban statement.

The Taliban said a special team had been set up to keep watch on bin Laden to ensure the restrictions were met. An unidentified Taliban spokesman was quoted as saying the militia leadership would review bin Laden's "guest status" if the bans were violated in any way.

The Taliban described London's request for Kabul to control bin Laden's activities as "more reasonable" than Washington's demand that he be expelled. A Taliban spokesman, Abdul

Mutmaen, said Tuesday that bin Laden was free to leave Afghanistan, but he would not be forced out. —AFP

Reuters adds: Afghanistan's Taliban militia on Wednesday ruled out extradition of Saudi millionaire

Osama bin Laden, saying such a request was illogical.

The United States has accused bin Laden of masterminding the bomb attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last August that killed 263 people. It has offered a reward of \$5 million for information leading to his arrest and conviction.

"This is not rational to say that Osama should be expelled, extradited or handed over. Any move on these lines against Osama will cause a lot of resentment and a chaotic situation among the Afghans and the whole Muslim world," Taliban spokesman Mullah Abdul Haye Mutmaen told Reuters.

Mutmaen was speaking by telephone from the southern Afghan town of Kandahar after the Taliban leadership there considered a letter sent by the United States. The letter was handed over to Taliban envoy Mullah Abdul Jalil during a meeting with Deputy US Secretary of State Karl R. Rumsfeld in Pakistan last week.

Neither side has disclosed the contents of the letter, but the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press said on Saturday that Washington had proposed the Taliban either hand over bin Laden to the United States or to Saudi Arabia, or expel him. "No Muslim or Afghan would accept the handing over of Osama. We guarantee we will control his political and military activities," Mutmaen said.

"Afghans worry that the US just makes excuses about Osama's presence and in reality wants to block the establishment of a strong Islamic government under the Taliban

# Taliban renew appeal for aid as quake toll rises to 75

News 990215

ISLAMABAD (NNI) — Taliban on Sunday renewed appeal for international aid for the earthquake affectees as the death toll from the quake in Afghanistan rose to 75.

Taliban charge d'affaires Maulvi Saeedur Rahman Haqqani said that the aid, reached so far, is very meagre and the affected people need more.

He said some 500 people have been injured while 7000 houses have either destroyed totally or damaged partially in the quake-hit areas. The quake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck three provinces—Maidan Wardak, Ghazni and Logar—on Thursday. The tremour were felt in many parts of Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

More than a dozen children were frozen to death, according to a report reached here. The children died in Chak district in Wardak province after strong aftershocks forced thousands out of their homes. At least 44 aftershocks were felt Friday night alone in Chak, said the report.

Haqqani said he talked to UN Coordinator in Islamabad De Mule and urged for emergency aid. He said rescue operations are continued and feared that the number of dead may further rise.

ICRC, WHO and Red Cross teams in Kabul visited the affected areas for assessment of the losses and supplied medicines and essential commodities.

## 30 pc quake-hit Afghan kids have pneumonia

KABUL (AFP) — At least 30 percent of children in Afghanistan's quake-hit Wardak province have caught pneumonia as continued aftershocks scare them into staying out doors in freezing temperatures, official Radio Shariat said Wednesday.

The station said people in three quake-hit districts of eastern Wardak province were living in the open under snow and rain as another six aftershocks jolted the area in the past 48 hours.

The aftershocks caused no more casualties but destroyed those houses which were damaged in the initial jolts, it said.

"According to a concerned source, the condition of the quake victims, particularly children and elderly, is very sad," it added.

"80 percent of children and old people have rheumatic complaints and another 40 percent of them have mental problems," it said.

An official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in a statement Tuesday described the current situation as "critical."

in Afghanistan," he said.

On Monday, Britain also told the Taliban, who control more than 90 per cent of Afghanistan, to "get control of" bin Laden. The message was delivered by British Foreign Office Minister of State Derek Fatchett in the first ministerial-level talks between the Islamic militia and London.

NNI, PPI add: Another senior Taliban leader, Maulvi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakel, has accused the United States of hurling threats to settle the issues of Osama with the use of force.

In an interview with VOA, he termed the remarks of Clark, coordinator to the US President on combating terrorism, as illogical and said that such remarks amounted to inviting war or demonstrating power and might instead of adopting a proper way and finding a negotiated settlement to the issue.

Mutawakel said that Taliban have repeatedly given assurance that they would not allow any one to use Afghan territory against others but even then Washington has been insisting on the extradition of Osama bin Laden. This, he said, creates doubts that the United States is not ready to tolerate an independent and true government in Afghanistan.

Mutawakel described talks between the British minister and Taliban Deputy Foreign Minister Abdul Rahman Zahid in Islamabad on Monday as "satisfactory to a great extent".

They discussed aid to Afghanistan, solution to the Afghan conflict, terrorism and drugs, he was quoted as saying by BBC Wednesday. He said "I think the role of Afghanistan in international issues is important. We have always tried to be in touch with the countries and now when they have become ready for such contacts, it is satisfactory. So far as the issue of Osama bin Laden is concerned, we are sure that his presence in Afghanistan does not mean that he would use Afghan territory against others," he maintained.

# 50 killed, 210 injured in Afghan quake

Nation 990213

## Death toll may rise: Tremors also felt in Pakistan: Measured 5.5 on Richter scale

KABUL (AFP) - At least 50 people were killed and 210 injured in a strong earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan, officials and medical sources said on Friday.

Radio Shariat said the 50 were killed in just three villages near Mayden Sahr, about 60km west of Kabul in late Thursday's earthquake.

The Taliban authorities appealed for help from abroad.

"The condition of the people is bad. There is a lot of destruction and casualties... the people need urgent help from international agencies," the radio said. Many areas had been affected, houses had collapsed and livestock killed, with reports from remote rural areas still coming in.

"Casualty figures elsewhere were not known," the radio said.

The Red Cross said it would rush medical supplies and doctors to the area Saturday morning.

"There are casualties and houses have collapsed but the problem with Afghanistan is communications," a Red Cross spokesman told AFP.

The earthquake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck at 6:35 pm local time (1405 GMT) on Thursday and was felt in Pakistan and throughout the Panjsher valley to the north of Kabul.

Its epicentre was placed by the observatory in Peshawar at about 60km south of Kabul in Logar, a province dotted by villages and mud brick hamlets.

The area is also the site of a major earthquake fault line which stretches from Iran to Pakistan and across Afghanistan's central and southern provinces.

The Red Cross spokesman and Kabul

residents said the earthquake lasted an unusually long time, perhaps a minute. "But this gave many people enough warning to get out of their houses before it intensified and that has probably kept the casualty figures down," the Red Cross spokesman said.

In Kabul, 10 people were admitted to Wazir Akhbar Khan and Carte Se hospitals where doctors, citing reports from the injured, said more people were feared dead.

"We've been told that quite a few children may have died," Dr Arif from Carte Se, told AFP.

He said most people had been treated for trauma and fractured limbs.

Two earthquakes in February and June last year in the country's north east left some 8,500 people dead. Both times it took days to determine the extent of the damage.

In December, Kabul was struck by a series of earthquakes, the strongest measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale, which left eight people dead after a dilapidated hotel collapsed.

However, local residents said the recent heavy rains and the preponderance of mud brick homes would have increased the vulnerability to the earthquake.

There were also concerns about the supply of foreign help.

The United Nations and most foreign aid organisations were evacuated from Afghanistan shortly after the US missile strike on suspected terrorist bases on August 20 last year.

Some non-government organisations have since returned but the UN agencies are still negotiating the conditions for their return with the Taliban authorities who control about 80 percent of the country.

# Afghan earthquake death toll rises to 67

ANDER, Afghanistan: The death toll from an earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan two days ago continued to climb Saturday as rescue efforts get underway in isolated districts outside of Kabul.

The official Bakhtar news agency said it had confirmed 67 dead and another 10 children had died after they froze to death because they were too scared to return to their homes.

At least another 210 were injured and the number left homeless has risen to more than 1,000, combined reports said.

Radio Shariat said "the condition of the people is bad. There is a lot of destruction and casualties... the people need urgent help from international agencies."

"We've been told that quite a few children may have died," Dr Aref from Carte Se Hospital told AFP.

He said most people had been treated for head trauma, arm and leg fractures.

In Ander, near the earthquake's epicentre about 70 kilometres west of Kabul, Wardak provincial Governor Malawy Shamsuddin told AFP that 200 people from two villages were homeless.

"Nine villages were severely affected in the region but we still don't have accurate figures," he said.

Authorities said a further 44 aftershocks had followed Thursday's quake with a major tremor felt in Kabul midafternoon on Saturday.

Hardest hit areas include Mayden Sar in Wardak and surrounding villages like Ander and Chak, and hamlets in Logar province. The area covers about 1,000 square kilometres to the east and south of Kabul.

"Ten young boys and girls have died in Chak where people are scared to go back to their houses," a Taliban source said.

He said Chak was believed to be the worst-hit with 1,000 houses levelled and relief efforts have failed to reach them. "Three hundred houses in Bambi Keli village and another 200 in Alasang village near Chak were also destroyed," he said.

Red Cross spokesman Josue Anselmo said the volume of destruction in Wardak is "impressive" with some villages destroyed by 80 to 100 percent.

In Kabul, authorities said at least five houses have collapsed killing an elderly man, while local hospitals said 10 people had been admitted with injuries.

The earthquake measured 5.5 on the Richter scale and was felt as far as Pakistan. But recent heavy rains and the vast number of mud brick homes

was expected to exacerbate the casualty figures.

Five Red Cross trucks laden with supplies left this morning to the affected areas under a joint operation with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

"The assessment is not finished. Therefore it is hard to give a precise number of casualties and the scale of destruction," Anselmo said.

He said shelter was most needed as people are afraid to return to their homes and are living in makeshift tents and under bridges.

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban have made a plea for relief from international agencies, although most evacuated the country last August after the US missile strike on suspected terrorist bases in Afghanistan.

However, Anselmo said no direct request for help from the Taliban had been received.

Logar is also the site of a major earthquake fault line which stretches from Iran to Pakistan and across Afghanistan's central and southern provinces.

Two earthquakes in February and June last year in the country's north east left some 8,500 people dead. Both times it took days to determine the extent of the damage. —AFP

# Soviet pullout prepared Kabul for further conflict

News 990215

KABUL (AFP) - Some of the causes of the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan can be traced to February 15, 1989, the day the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan but left its proxies behind, analysts say.

The Red Army had marched into Afghanistan in December 1978 to prop up Kabul's crumbling communist regime which it had openly supported after a palace coup removed the monarchy in 1973.

Officially, some 15,000 Soviet soldiers died fighting in Afghanistan but unofficial estimates put the figure much higher. Billions of dollars were spent to support Moscow's investment which historians say dated back to the early 1950s.

The Soviet legacy in Afghanistan was an estimated 1.5 million resistance fighters killed and five million refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

Western analysts expected the communist regime of president Najibullah to fall within days of the Soviet pullout, but it clung to power for three more years thanks to a constant flow of arms from Moscow, and infighting among opposition groups.

"The time was ripe for a political solution but the Soviets kept interfering and the US and Pakistan kept arming different factions in the Mujahideen," one local analyst said. "Each country did this to suit itself and none of this was in Afghanistan's best interests, contributing heavily to the mess we have today," he added.

Between 1989 and 1992 Soviet support for the Kabul regime was estimated at 320 million dollars a month until the Soviet Union was dismantled, ending the Cold War.

In early 1992, mutineers within Najibullah's ranks entered an alliance with the anti-Soviet resistance fighter,

Commander Ahmad Shah Masood. As the alliance closed in on Kabul, Najibullah was forced to stand down under a United Nations-sponsored power sharing agreement. Masood seized power.

Najibullah, who ran Kabul's loathed secret service during the Soviet occupation, took refuge in a UN compound. He was replaced by Sibghatullah Mujahiddi who served an agreed two-month term before handing over the

reins to Burhanuddin Rabbani, who under the brokered terms was allowed six months in power.

"No role was found for the royal family which historically had been seen as the one unifying force in a country dominated by six ethnic groups, two official languages and tribal warlords," a western observer said.

Peace eluded as fighting continued among the Mujahideen groups. Rabbani refused to stand down as

president and staged his own election for a council of ulema (clerics). But the Mujahideen factions claimed the election was rigged.

The one-time anti-Soviet allies went to war. Two-thirds of Kabul was destroyed and 60,000 people killed in four years of chaos with Masood fighting Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, chief of the Hezbi-Islami faction.

Plans for a compromise failed until a new force, the Taliban religious students, ousted the warring factions from Kabul in September 1996.

The Taliban sprang early 1994 in the southern province of Kandahar which had become a notorious model of the Mujahideen anarchy, warlordism and crime.

They routed the Mujahideen from Kabul. Najibullah and his brother were taken from the UN compound and hanged in public and the fighting resumed in the countryside and waste in the years of Soviet invasion.

Thousands lost their lives as the Taliban mounted a relentless campaign to take northern Afghanistan, the stronghold of their enemies.

The Taliban still control around 40 percent of the country. They are now battling Masood's forces entrenched in the Hindu Kush mountain ranges and remain convinced total control is within their grasp.

"Every faction which has grabbed power has persisted with fighting what was left of their opposition in search of a final military solution. This has only resulted in further bloodshed," an Afghan analyst said.

"I think peace will never come," I am tired of hoping for peace and following the constant stream of news on political and military developments," he said.

## Russians still rue their Afghan war

MOSCOW (AFP) - A decade after the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan on February 15, 1989, the scars left among Russians by the 10-year 'Afghan war' are still far from healed.

The Soviet military intervention decided in secret in December 1979 by a select caucus of Politburo members, is today seen as a major 'political error' by the then Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev.

At the time however, the intervention was presented in official propaganda and the media as assistance to 'a fraternal people'. The first Soviet television reports showed Russian soldiers building nursery schools and helping plant gardens.

However the first casualties and most of all the ill-famed zinc coffins, soon dispelled any doubts about what the Russian troops were really doing in Afghanistan, even though the Communist Party Central Committee forbade any mention on gravesites about how or where the men had died.

## Taliban suspect Osama has fled Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - A spokesman for the Taliban militia was quoted as telling a private Afghan news service on Wednesday that Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden had probably left Afghanistan.

"We have no specific information about Osama bin Laden but we strongly suspect now that he has left Afghanistan," the spokesman told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

Taliban officials last week said the multi-millionaire and alleged terrorist, who had been living in Afghanistan as guest of the hard-line militia, was missing.

The Pakistan-based AIP said the spokesman, who requested not to be identified by name, gave no details when asked which country bin Laden might have gone to.

Independent confirmation of the AIP report was not immediately available.

The report came after an anti-Taliban alliance spokesman claimed Tuesday that bin Laden had been sighted inside Afghanistan by troops loyal to the Afghan opposition.

# Osama bin Laden to be protected: religious groups

News 990214

KARACHI: Three Pakistani Islamic parties have condemned US pressure on Afghanistan's Taliban regime to expel Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, vowing that forces loyal to Islam in the region would protect him.

Umer Farooq, leader of Lashkar-i-Tayaba, told AFP Friday that "Mujahideen (Islamic warriors) would sacrifice their lives to defend the hero of Islam."

"The Taliban will never hand over Osama to the enemies of Islam. He is in safe hands. And if the US tries to take him to their land, they would have to pass over the bodies of Mujahideen," Farooq said.

Bin Laden, who lives in Afghanistan as guest of the Taliban Islamic militia, has been accused by Washington of masterminding the

bombings in August of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that left more than 200 people dead.

Tariq Madani, a central leader of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, said Bin Laden's Arab guards would frustrate any attempt to harm him.

He said if the Taliban regime bowed to US demands out of a desire to break-out of international isolation, it could split the Taliban ranks.

"The Taliban cannot betray either the Mujahideen or Osama," Madani said.

Ghafoor Ahmed, deputy chief of Jamaat-i-Islami, said "the US should stop dictating to Muslim countries, especially the Taliban."

"This is the time that the Muslim world should be united and not let the US dictate to us," he said.

The Taliban regime has report-

edly banned Bin Laden from receiving visitors or having outside contact and withdrawn all communication equipment including his telephone and radio.

The Taliban, who control more than 80 percent of Afghanistan, have said Bin Laden was free to leave Afghanistan, but that he would not be forced out.

"Let America prove that Bin Laden is a terrorist and, if do, we will support them. But we will not accept pressure for nothing," Ahmed said.

Mehmood Khan, a leader of the Pasban group, a youth wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, urged the Taliban to resist outside pressures.

The Taliban have demanded that the US provide concrete proof of Bin Laden's role in sponsoring international terrorism. —AFP

## Afghan governor appeals for immediate world assistance

News 990215

KABUL: The governor of earthquake-hit Wardak province in eastern Afghanistan Sunday called for urgent international assistance, fearing more casualties from exposure and lack of shelter.

Maulvi Shamsuddin urged the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other relief agencies to rush immediate aid to the province, officials said.

Meanwhile, rescuers searched Sunday for 27 children still missing after a severe earthquake which hit eastern Afghanistan four days ago, killing at least 67 people, officials said. Among the dead were 10 children who reportedly froze to death because they were too afraid to go back to their homes.

Heela Mand, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross said a group had been formed to coordinate relief activities in the quake-stricken provinces of Wardak and Logar. "The Red Cross has sufficient supplies to distribute to the affected people," Heela Mand said.

Five Red Cross trucks with relief goods reached some of the devastated villages Saturday. Remote villages in Wardak and Logar badly needed shelter and medicines, travellers said. The hardest-hit areas included Maidan Sahar in Wardak and surrounding villages Ander and Chak, as well as hamlets in Logar province. The area covers about 1,000 square kilometres to the east and south of Kabul. —AFP

## Osama's family still in Taliban area: spokesman

News 990217

KABUL: Asserting that Bin Laden's family "is in Afghanistan in areas under the control of the Taliban," a top Taliban spokesman said on Tuesday he had no idea why Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden had left his southern Afghan sanctuary.

He also denied that "Bin Laden may have been killed". He was responding to rumours circulating in neighbouring Iran said "we have received no report about his death."

Chief Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil told Reuters from the southern city of Kandahar, "we don't know and don't have any reason to say why Osama has vanished."

He told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) news agency that there are women and children, but Osama and his aides have vanished.

Muttawakil was reacting to press reports that said Bin Laden might have left Afghanistan several weeks ago after being "shubbed" by the Taliban's supreme leader, Mulla Mohammed Omar.

Reports in foreign Arabic newspapers and some sections of the Pakistani press said Omar kept bin Laden waiting when the Saudi went to congratulate him on Eid in January last.

Media reports have placed Bin Laden inside Afghanistan in territory held by the anti-Taliban opposition and in places as far apart as Iraq and Chechnya. His disappearance followed new US warnings that it reserved the right to use military force in pursuit of bin Laden, who has been charged with masterminding the bomb attacks on US embassies in East Africa that killed 250 people. Omar and other senior Taliban officials insist that Bin Laden was not asked to leave and denied any suggestion that his disappearance was linked to new US pressure. —Reuters/AFP

# Afghans in exile fear harassment from Taliban

News 990218

**PESHAWAR:** In the dead of night, two masked men scaled a 3-meter wall around the home of a prominent Afghan political activist living in exile and murdered his wife and 11-year-old son.

Police said the intruders sliced the telephone lines and slipped into the home of Abdul Haq, who was away. While everyone slept the gunmen fired seven shots. Five bullets struck his wife, one his son and the other their bodyguard. All three died.

No one claimed responsibility for the January 12 slaying and Haq was reluctant to blame anyone.

But many Afghan exiles in Pakistan, and the human rights group Amnesty International, say prominent Afghans and their families have been targeted by harassment, threats and shootings in recent months. They blame the Taliban that rules most of Afghanistan.

Taliban leaders, whose Islamic movement has been supported by Pakistan, deny the charges. They say their fighters are not operating outside Afghan territory.

"We are not interested in any other country. ... We have enough problems in our own country," said Abdul Sattar Pakhtaney, a spokesman for the Taliban's foreign ministry.

The victims of recent attacks in Pakistan, where 1.5 million Afghans still live as refugees, have in common opposition to the Taliban and the strict vision of Islamic law it has imposed on their homeland.

Like Haq they have supported replacing the Taliban regime with a broader-based government in Afghanistan and have strongly opposed Taliban restrictions on the life of women.

Among the recent incidents in Pakistan:

—The brother-in-law of Afghanistan's last communist president, Najibullah, who was hanged by the Taliban army, was slain.

—Gunmen shot into the home of Shah Bacha Shinwari, head of a moderate Afghan reconciliation commission, wounding his wife and son.

—The home of Satana Gul Sherzad, a leader of the Afghan national democratic party, was attacked but no one was injured.

—Several men attacked the home of Shah Agha Mujaddidi, a close relative of former Afghan president Sibghatullah Mujaddidi, a former anti-communist resistance fighter and a strong advocate of a broad-based government to replace the Taliban.

—Afghan women who have jobs in Peshawar have been threatened by stick-wielding men who claimed to be Taliban members and warned the women to quit work and stay at home.

—Fatana Gailani, head of the Afghan women council, a women's rights group, said her life had been threatened and she had been followed.

—The Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, which seeks equal opportunity for women,

cancelled a rally in December in Peshawar after men claiming to be Taliban supporters threatened to break their legs if they went ahead with the demonstration.

—Female teachers at girls schools in Afghan refugee camps say they have been warned by men to teach the girls only verses from the holy Quran, and to end the girls' schooling once they reach age of 8. So far the teachers have resisted.

Police in the NWFP say the attacks and killings are not related, but some officials within the government suspect links to the Taliban.

Abdul Hafeez Arty, an official at the Afghan commissionerate, the Pakistani government department that looks after the 1.5 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, cited the Haq case as an example.

He said it was probable the Taliban "thought Abdul Haq could be a serious threat," thus the killings.

Amnesty International wants Pakistan to do more to protect Afghans, but Afghans exiles say the Pakistani government is reluctant to crack down on Taliban supporters. Pakistan is one of only three countries to recognize the Taliban government.

"This is the responsibility of the host country to look after the safety of those who live here. ... But there is not sufficient security," said Pir Ahmed Gailani, a moderate Afghan leader who has criticized the Taliban. "otherwise why are Afghans getting killed here?"—AP

## UN medical aid for Afghanistan quake victims

News 990216

From Our Correspondent

**PESHAWAR** — In response to calls from authorities and the affected communities, UN agencies are currently contributing essential medical and shelter materials at the scene of Thursday's earthquake in the snowy Afghan mountains south of Kabul, states a Press release issued here on Monday.

Working in collaboration with the Afghan Office of Disaster Preparedness, the International Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross societies and non-governmental organisations, UN staff have visited the site and agreed on a joint response to assist the affected villages.

Efforts continue to assess overall damage, at the same time that international organisations in Kabul are meeting the emergency needs, which so far have involved dealing with injuries

and exposure to the cold.

The earthquake, which registered 5.5 on the richter scale, struck an area in Wardak and Logar provinces, some 60 kms south of Kabul on Thursday evening. According to ICRC/IFRC assessments, some 35 people have been killed in 25 villages and hundreds injured. International agencies estimate that about 2,300 homes have been destroyed in the villages surveyed to date.

Casualties are thought to have been limited due to the fact a smaller tremor preceded the main quake, alerting people to leave their houses.

The World Health Organisation on Saturday sent emergency medical supplies to the affected area. Currently, the UN is moving additional tarpaulins and plastic sheeting from Kabul to provide emergency shelter

for the affected villages. Safe drinking water is also expected to be needed soon. While food aid is not considered a priority at this moment. The World Food Programme has made available several hundred tons of food which to be trucked to the area when needed.

Given the extent of the damage to housing, the UN is already planning a significant reconstruction programme.

UN international staff have been out of Afghanistan since August; however, UN humanitarian projects have continued throughout the country, managed by national staff. Following last week's technical observation mission to Kabul, the UN had planned to undertake further security assessments in the country as soon as possible to pave the way for the return of international humanitarian workers. In the meantime, the



# Taliban dismantles 34 heroin labs in Nangrahar

News 990220

By Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: The Taliban swooped on heroin laboratories 70 kilometres southeast of here following a decree by their supreme leader Mulla Muhammad Omar to dismantle "hidden nests which convert opium gum into heroin".

"Those existed hidden nests (secret laboratories) which convert opium gum into heroin must be dismantled," the short order signed by Mulla Omar said. The decree was read out by Abdul Hamid Akhundzada, high commissioner for drug control before a group of Pakistani and western journalists at Jalalabad's Spin Ghar Hotel Friday. He said that teams had been constituted in accordance with the decree to locate and dismantle all heroin manufacturing laboratories in Afghanistan. "We have begun our operation and as a first step dismantled 34 heroin laboratories in two districts of Afghanistan's eastern Nangrahar province." A similar operation in Kandahar's Maiwand and Ghoarak districts will follow suit, Akhundzada said.

United Nations Drug Control Programme hailed the operation, describing it a major breakthrough. "For us, this is a major breakthrough. We have been encouraging the Taliban to take action," the UNDCP Jalalabad's Programme Officer and Officer in Charge, Muhammad Naseeb told The News. "It is evident now that the Taliban are serious about and mean business," he said.

Akhundzada said it took them one month to locate the heroin lab-

oratories through their intelligence network while the operation to dismantle these "hidden nests" began last Sunday. The Taliban's drug control chief told in all 34 heroin laboratories had been dismantled in Khugyani and Achin districts of Nangrahar close to the Pak-Afghan border. "There was no resistance," Nangrahar's police chief Maulavi Abdul Ta'ha said. Fourteen people, all local workers at the laboratories, have been picked up and put behind the bars, pending their trial before the shariah court, Akhundzada said.

Abdul Hameed Akhundzada reiterated time and again that the Taliban's operation against illicit drug manufacturing did not come about under international pressure. "Neither have we done this because of international pressure nor are we obliged to do so. We have done all this because we believe that this is a dangerous stuff and is harmful to human life. This is not a time-limited operation, it will continue in accordance with the orders of Amirul Momineen, Mulla Muhammad Omar."

Akhundzada however, made it clear that the Taliban had no immediate plans to ban poppy in Afghanistan owing to people's economic difficulties and lack of alternative means of livelihood. "We want to ban poppy cultivation gradually. We can't do it in one go. People will face a lot of problems. Assistance or no assistance, this is the plan of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," he said, while lamenting that international community has been slow in providing assistance to the Taliban to control drug

trafficking and provide rehabilitation and drug treatment facilities to the people. He said that the UNDCP has launched three pilot projects in Afghanistan, including two districts in Kandahar and one in Nangrahar to divert poppy growers to other profitable crops. "We will see whether these are successful." "People will happily give up poppy if given alternative means of livelihood," he said.

The UNDCP official said the Taliban have assured to help reduce poppy cultivation by 50% next year, bringing down to zero level by the year 2000.

He said that most of heroin manufactured was smuggled back to Pakistan through the adjoining Chitral, Paktia, Paktika, and Poonch provinces, through the former Soviet central Asian republics via Afghanistan's Badakhshan province. The chemicals used in heroin manufacturing came from Pakistan, he said, while one of the main ingredients, acetic anhydride came from India and Germany.

Later, the journalists were driven for three hours on a rugged, bumpy road to the mountainous Och Bander in Achin district to show them the dismantled heroin laboratories and were allowed to meet the workers arrested during the operation at the Achin district jail. "We are workers and were paid Rs 500 a day," Ghainullah, a worker in his late thirties said. He said that owners of these laboratories were Afghani tribal chiefs of the adjoining Pakistani tribal territory and had fled, apparently getting wind of the impending operation.

## Aid agencies survey Afghan quake damage

News 990215

KABUL: Relief agencies scoured the hills and valleys of southwest Afghanistan on Sunday to gauge the extent of a powerful earthquake which the ruling Taliban said killed more than 50 people, injured 200 and flattened 900 homes.

Aid workers said teams from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Red Cross Federation and the Afghan Red Crescent went to Sheikh Abaad to the west of Kabul, one of the worst-hit areas, and to Logar province to the south. The two areas have not been surveyed but reports reaching the capital from travellers suggested that there had been more fatalities and casualties in Logar province. The Taliban said that the death toll had risen to 57, with more than 200 injured and close to 1,000 homes flattened after initial surveys in the Maidan Shahr region west of Kabul on Saturday. Thursday night's

quake measured 5.5 on the Richter scale and sent alarm bells through the international aid community after two major quake disasters last year killed 8,000. A fresh tremor shook Kabul and surrounding areas on Saturday but there were no reports of injury or damage. An International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) team visited the Maidan Shahr area on Saturday but spokesmen said it was too early to give an accurate picture of the damage. The ICRC said an initial survey found that one village had been destroyed. "Out of six villages assessed by the teams, one was 100% destroyed whilst the scale of destruction of three others ranged from 50 to 80 percent," an ICRC statement said. "Quite a number of people are scared to go back to their residence and sleep in makeshift tents or find a shelter under a bridge for the night," said ICRC official Pascal Hundt. —Reuters

## Taliban arms depot explodes outside Kabul

News 990217

KABUL: A Taliban ammunition depot exploded at a military base outside the Afghan capital Kabul on Monday night, but the Islamic militia ruled out sabotage.

"The depot caught fire, and we could not do anything to extinguish or stop it," one Taliban official said.

He blamed the incident on "negligence" but gave no further details. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage from the blaze, residents said.

They said there were more than three hours of explosions behind a military academy, some 12 km east of the capital on the main road that links it to the eastern region and Pakistan.

"We could hear light and heavy blasts constantly, and thought fighting had erupted," Fahim, a resident who lives close to the site, told Reuters.

The base is also close to the so-called New Road, which leads to the front line north of Kabul where the Taliban and forces of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood are dug in.

Taliban fighters at the base prevented reporters from visiting the site of the explosion where several types of ammunition were stored on open ground inside a depot.

There have been several blasts in Kabul since the Taliban captured the city two years ago from Masood, the military head of the deposed government.

In 1997 a tank loaded with ammunition exploded outside a top Taliban minister's house, but he was unhurt. A few months ago a small ammunition store in front of the Cuban embassy, which is occupied by Pakistani Taliban followers, also blew up. — Reuters

# Visiting the erstwhile heroin-producing Afghan area

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**BY SYED BUKHAR SHAH**  
PESHAWAR - There was nothing else except a room, a middle sized veranda and few ovens in the open field at the bottom of a mountain. Another small room was also there where the workers could stay for nights. And that was one of the main heroin manufacturing factory, recently destroyed by the Afghanistan's Taliban Students militia in the south eastern province of Jalalabad, bordering Pakistan.

Almost all the labourers working in this main factory were local, to earn their livelihood by converting opium gum into heroin for the last several years. All the visiting people, who had reached to this last main factory, after a four hour long journey from Jalalabad, were surprised to see that this was the place where the white powder worth billions of rupees were being prepared and smuggled throughout the world.

This main factory was established at the bottom of Spin Ghar. It was the last Darra (pass) of Aouch Bandar, of Achin Aulouswali, in the Nangrahar province and covered by the mountains from all four sides. By crossing the Spin Ghar, a person could enter into the Pakistani tribal area, Tirah and Kurram agency. Out of the total 21 heroin manufacturing factories in Achin Aulouswali, nine were situated in Aouch Bandar, eight in Jangal Shiga and four in Dry Sarak but the rest were smaller than it.

We had earlier witnessed the first factory in this village. That was established at the middle of a mountain. That was almost the same size

against these factories had been completed two week back. The ashes, pieces of bottles, destroyed heroin in and other materials could be seen in almost every factory. Dozens of destroyed bags full of mud-like materials, were also seen in almost every factory. This mud-like opium was being used to prepare a third grade heroin and the workers of the factories had the right to sell it for themselves. The first and second grade heroin of the opium was very precious and was being sold at Rs 70 to 80,000 per kilo. Such fine and first grade heroin was being smuggled to Europe, West and America and other countries from here from different routes. Three types of heroin are being prepared here. The first and best type is used in injection, the second one is called white and hid is called brown. The brown powder is being prepared from such mud-like opium and this is cheapest. This is extremely injurious and all the dirty and destroyed opium is included in it. Only one kilo, brown heroin could be obtained from 20 to 30 bags of destroyed and used opium.

The opium and heroin of this area, Aouch Bandar, is considered as one of the best heroin throughout the world. The local Taliban and other experts said that the particular season and environment was the main reason for it. The materials and other acids for the manufacturing heroin is also being brought from Germany, India, Pakistan and Iran through different routes. Every worker was being paid Rs 500 per day for his day long service and all of them prepare 11 to 12 kilo while

powder daily. Some of them, who could more work than the rest of his colleagues, usually get more than Rs 500. The factories worked day and night. These labourers had to bring water, wood and other materials to be used in the manufacturing of this deadly powder.

Although all the Taliban leaders with whom we talked, were considering the labourers as innocent but still they said the court would decide their fate, and what to do with them. According to the prisoners, they had no prior information about the Taliban's raid on their factories while the owners and other experts had fled away from the site in time. Although, the Taliban High Commissioner for Drug Control, had a list of the owners of these factories but the workers said they never met with them. The owners, majority of them, were Afghans, had hired the services of some Pakistani experts which they called them as "Ustiazan" from the adjacent tribal areas.

The Commander, Chief of Nangrahar Police, Molvi Ahmad Tuhra, who had conducted raids on these factories said that they took a month to collect complete information through their Intelligence net work. Then, we ordered them to stop manufacturing heroin but they did not comply. Pointing towards the broken pieces of bottles, the commander said these bottles had been supplied to them from Russia and other acids from Pakistan. He said they had destroyed all the factories in this area and the rest, if any, would also be destroyed in near fu-

ture. He said they had taken action against such factories on the decree of their Amir and the people knew it better that whenever Taliban took a decision, they definitely do that work, come what may.

Although the Taliban government took such an extreme step against the heroin production for the first time since they assumed the charge of government, the poppy cultivation was in full progress. The entire area from Jalalabad to Achin Aulouswali, and other far flung hilly area, through which we travelled, was green from both sides of the road. The Taliban leaders said they had not yet decided to destroy the standing crops of the poppy of the people. However, they were still waiting for the decision of their Amir-ul-Momineen. The people having small lands, had no other business. There is neither any road, nor factory. They had no source of income except this poppy. The Taliban said the people would happily destroy their poppy crops if they were given alternate source of income. This is one of the most difficult business to grow poppy. Its income is also very low for the local people if it was compared with that of the people hard work.

Although the Agricultural department of the Nangrahar University had launched a project, asking the people to grow other crops instead of poppy. The representatives of the agriculture department said that they had convinced the people and presently, they had convinced 60 farmers. We have provided to them

the seeds and other assistance to them to grow vegetables, fruits and establish various agricultural farms. He said they had established 60 gardens, each on one jecrab of land. These garden, he said would produce fruits within three years and its income would be more than that of the poppy crops. Although, he said it would take time to convince the illiterate people but still its result and their efforts would change the lot of these people within next 10 years.

Taliban leaders, while justifying their action against the heroin factories, termed heroin as an Islamic, anti humanity, said they had destroyed it on the directives of their Amir. It, they said, was not right to say that these factories had been destroyed on the pressure of the western power.

However, the High Commissioner of Drug control, Abdul Hamid Akhundzada said they had held several meetings with the UN representatives but he said the UN was assisting them only in the cultivation of poppy problem. He said presently, they had been facing three problems i.e. cultivation, trafficking and Rehabilitation.

He said the people would happily destroy their own poppy if they were given alternate source of income. One of the participant in the visit, said that the super powers and other developed nations had been giving assistance to Afghan leaders for the destruction of their country but now all of them had adopted silence when the time has come to rehabilitate and reconstruct the war torn country and its affected people.

## US rules out Taliban govt recognition

From SIKANDER HAYAT

ISLAMABAD - The United States has ruled out recognition of Taliban government in return of their cooperation to extradite Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

The State Department spokesman, transcript of whose briefing on Wednesday was released here by the USIS, said the US policy concerning Afghanistan remaining unchanged "which is that we don't recognise any particular faction as the official legitimate government of Afghanistan."

He was asked if Osama Bin Laden is handed over to Washington by the Taliban, would that trigger move towards the recognition of the student militia government.

The spokesman insisted that the question of recognition would be decided on the "basis of working with UN Secretary General's representative Brahimi, on the basis of reconciliation, dialogue, discussion among parties, as a predicate to the constitution of a broad-based government in Afghanistan".

The spokesman did not agree with a suggestion that in line with the US policy of dealing with anyone who is in control of territory, the Taliban deserve the American recognition. "I didn't say they (Taliban) were in control of all of Afghanistan," he added.

To the question what are Washington's expectations from Pakistan the spokesman said, "we always urge our Pakistani friends to exercise that influence (inside Afghanistan) in the interest of our common interest against terrorists".

# ICRC completes relief operation in Afghanistan

F.P. Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD

Josue Anselmo, information delegate for Afghanistan of the International Committee of the Red Cross Monday said the ICRC carried out its last distribution to the earthquake-hit victims of Afghanistan.

Briefing the newsmen Anselmo said together with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ICRC assisted 40,000 people in the earthquake-hit areas of Maydan-Wardak and Logar provinces, some 100 miles south of Kabul.

The area was damaged by earthquake on February 11, at 6:40 pm.

He said 40,000 people were assisted with 45,800 blankets, 56 tons of coal, 772 stoves, 1,136 rolls of plastic sheeting, 1,960 tents, 9,100 jerry cans, 4,500 sweaters, 4,900 cooking sets, 2000 quilts, and 18,600 soap bars.

Assisted by Paul-Henri (ARNI), deputy head of the delegation in Pakistan of the International

Committee of the Red Cross, Anselmo, said the Red Cross and Red Crescent had assessed that 65 people have been killed and 498 injured due to the earthquake. Whereas 6,356 houses had been completely destroyed and over 11,000 have been damaged along with 278 mosques.

He said these were provisional figures.

He maintained that since February 12, the International Committee of the Red Cross had an average of three teams on the spot dealing with distribution whilst another three teams were dispatched in different parts of the affected areas to assess the situation.

He said: "We (International Committee of the Red Cross) have finished its distributions today after having covered 95 per cent of the needs in the most hit areas.

However, that the ICRC will continue to fill the last remaining gaps and monitor the aftermath of the crisis", he added.

UN sending relief for Afghan quake victims

ISLAMABAD - The United Nations and other international agencies have started sending relief supplies to the earthquake victims in parts of Wardak and Logar provinces 100 kilometres south of the Afghan capital.

On Thursday World Food Programme allocated 55 tons of wheat, beans and biscuits to 400 of the worst affected families in the quake-hit areas. UN international staff have been out of Afghanistan since August last due to US air strikes and subsequent murder of an Italian military observer. This week the UN sent four international staff members to Kabul to help coordinate quake relief efforts led by the Red Cross.

The relief supplies will include shelter and food to the scene of the earthquake.

Priority needs are for the shelter material.

UNICEF, UNHCR and Habitat are sending shelter materials and blankets to contribute to supplies being distributed by the Red Cross movement. UN World Health Organization sent medicines to treat the injured.

The earthquake hit Afghanistan two provinces on February 11. On the Richter intensity its force was registered between 5.5 and 5.9. It rendered 30,000 people homeless and killed as many as 70 people.

The UN press release, however, said the casualty count had not increased beyond some 39 dead and 256 wounded. The UN is also preparing an appeal for the donor countries to assist the quake victims. It is, meanwhile, also assessing the security conditions in Afghanistan in order to send back its international staff members to that war-torn country.

## Afghan opium production, trafficking on the rise: UN

News 990224

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan remains the world's primary source of opium with production rising and a substantial increase in trafficking through neighbouring countries, a United Nations report said Tuesday.

"Afghanistan could now be making all the illegal heroin that formerly came from Pakistan," said Bernard Frahi from the UN Drug Control Programme after the release of a UNDCP report here Tuesday. "The problem has certainly increased."

He said the UN's Narcotics Board believes heroin is now being stockpiled in northern Afghanistan near the Tajikistan border for trafficking into other countries. "Smugglers appear to have used new routes through the CIS countries in Central Asia, where drugs are further channelled to Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic states and thence into Western Europe," he said.

According to the report, Afghan raw opium production in 1998 rose nine percent from the previous year to 2,200 metric tonnes with the planted areas covering 63,000 hectares.

Frahi said while opium production was rising in Afghanistan, there was a continued marked change in the situation in Pakistan.

In 1979, Pakistan produced 800 tonnes of opium but this had fallen to 25 tonnes in 1998 and was forecast to drop to five tonnes this year. "Pakistan is on track to eliminate heroin production," Frahi said.—AFP

Reuters adds: He said UNDCP had been conducting an opium survey in the country since 1994 and last year the Taliban provided security for its survey teams.

"We have set up an excellent dialogue with the Taliban," he said, adding the agency was working in four districts to help farmers reduce poppy cultivation. But he did not comment on last week's statement from the Taliban that said they had ordered the destruction of all heroin-manufacturing factories in areas within its control.

Frahi said Pakistan was a "success story" for the elimination of poppy cultivation and was on track to completely halt cultivation of the plant by year 2000.

Frahi expressed concern over a rise in drug addiction in Pakistan where he estimated there were three million addicts, half of them heroin addicts. He said the agency was conducting a survey to get more accurate figures.

## Afghan 'mystery' disease diagnosed

News 990227

GENEVA: A "mystery" disease that has caused more than 150 deaths in several remote Afghan villages has been initially identified as a respiratory ailment, the World Health Organisation said Friday.

A team which reached JanarjeBala in northeast Afghanistan to investigate said there was no evidence of plague, malaria, cholera and typhus, the WHO said in Geneva. There have been between 50 and 60 deaths in the village since January 10.

The suspicion is that that deaths were caused by secondary infections. The symptoms are those of influenza, the WHO said.—AFP

## Taliban team meets Osama in Jalalabad

News 990225

From Dr JASSIM TAQUI

ISLAMABAD - Afghan Taliban officials meet Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden a few days ago in the eastern town of Jalalabad, reported London-based Arabic daily al-Hayat. It said "Informed Afghan sources told Al-Hayat that a delegation from Taliban a few days ago visited Osama bin Laden in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan in an effort to mend tense relations between the two sides."

Al-Hayat said the delegation which met bin Laden included the Taliban's deputy foreign minister Mullah Abdul Jalil and the head of the administrative affairs at the foreign minister.

It said that the two offered bin Laden to return to Kandahar-the Taliban's headquarters in southern Afghanistan, where he had been the "guest" of Taliban for the past three years.

"The sources attributed the new move by Taliban to the movement being convinced that bin Laden will not leave Afghanistan and it was not in a position to ask him to leave, so his presence at its stronghold in Kandahar will limit his movement," the paper disclosed.

In a related story al-Hayat quoting US intelligence said that the American agencies had blocked at least seven attacks on US facilities overseas by bin Laden since last summer's bombing of two US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. They even now expect surprise attacks on US and British interests, especially in Europe and the Middle East.

## Taliban retake central district from Opposition

News 990227

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Taliban militia has recaptured the district of Yawkowlang in central Afghanistan, two days after losing it to opposition forces, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported on Friday.

The district was retaken by the militia late Thursday in a counter-attack as fighters of Hezb-i-Wahdat faction retreated into the nearby mountains, the Pakistan-based private information service said.

Several soldiers on both sides were killed in the fighting and a rival commander Ahmad Shah was captured by the Islamic militia troops.

The fall of Yawkowlang in Bamiyan province to the opposition was reported by AIP on Thursday.

## 'Taliban ask Osama to return to Kandahar'

News 990225

DUBAI: The Taliban militia has asked alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden to return to its Kandahar stronghold in southwest Afghanistan, the Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat reported Wednesday.

The London-based daily said a Taliban delegation travelled to Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan to meet the Saudi dissident, who left Kandahar around two weeks ago.

The Taliban believe that "bin Laden will not leave Afghanistan and have come to the conclusion his presence in Kandahar would allow them to limit his movements," it said.

But the multi-millionaire Islamist "feels freer in Jalalabad", where he fought alongside the Mujahideen during the Soviet occupation of the 1980s, it said.

On February 17, a Taliban official said in Washington after meeting a se-

nior US diplomat that bin Laden was no longer in territory controlled by the Taliban.

"He is not in the area in control of the Taliban," Abdul Hakim Mujahid, the Taliban's New York-based representative said. "He decided himself to leave, we do not know where he is."

Al-Hayat said the same day that bin Laden had moved to a military base near Jalalabad that served the Hezb-i-Islami faction of Yunus Khalis during the Soviet occupation. It is now also under Taliban control.

Bin Laden is wanted in the United States for alleged involvement in the August 7, 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in which some 250 people were killed, including 12 Americans.

Washington has offered a five-million-dollar reward for his capture.—AFP

## UN faces fund crisis to repatriate Afghan refugees

News 990227

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Refugee Agency has said its programme to repatriate some two million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and Iran was facing a severe funding crisis because of lack of interest from donor countries. BBC reported.

The Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, Soranyason Peterson, said that donor countries were showing a total lack of interest in the repatriation and rehabilitation of the Afghan refugees.

The host countries chiefly Pakistan and Iran were finding it increasingly difficult to bear the burden of sending the refugees to their country.

Last year the UNHCR received less than 50 percent of its funding

needs for the Afghan refugees. And so far this year, the organisation has received under 10 percent of what is asked for to fund its 1999 Afghan programme.

Peterson said this year the UNHCR has received just one donation from the Swedish government.

He said many of the Afghans in Pakistan and Iran were tired of living in exile and they want to return home. But after such a long period of war in their home country, there was now a need for a lot of rehabilitation work to provide returning refugees with basic facilities and means to restart their lives.

More than 2.5 million Afghans are living in Pakistan and Iran.—APP

## Taliban stop visas to journalists

News 990227

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban restricted the entry of Pakistani and other foreign journalists into Afghanistan, a Taliban diplomat said on Friday.

"We have stopped issuing visas to Pakistani and journalists from other countries after publishing of some photographs in various papers," the diplomat said.

The embassy, he said, has received orders from Taliban's leadership in Kandahar not to grant visa to any Pakistani and journalists from other countries. However, he said the embassy only receives visa application forms and fax them to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kabul.

Taliban always show lukewarm response to journalists who want to proceed to Afghanistan. They are not allowing correspondents to visit Mazar-e-Sharif, Bamiyan and Herat.

# Sino-Afghan trade ties may affect Pak products

Nation 990225

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR – Despite contributing a lot, Pakistan is likely to lose the economic markets of Afghanistan as the Chinese officials have undertaken talks with the Afghan officials. The trade ties between two countries may affect Pak products.

The agenda of the direct talks between the Taliban leaders and Chinese rulers, being brokered by some of the leading businessmen from both the countries, is establishing Cargo flights between Beijing and Kabul, it was learnt reliably from some high level sources in Peshawar. The Chinese authorities have established contacts with the Afghan capital Kabul after a period of around 15 years, following closure of its embassy and withdrawal of the diplomatic staff during the regime of late Babrak Karmal.

The sources informed that in previous 1998, contacts at high level here established between Afghanistan and China. In this connection, both the countries have exchanged delegations with each other and the last Chinese delegation visited Kabul on January 28, 1999 last. Such a delegation, comprising four high ranking officers held detailed discussion with the Kabul authorities and made positive and valuable proposals for establishing trade links with each other.

So far, both the countries have agreed for establishing air trade links and in this connection the Cargo flights could be started between Kabul and Beijing. However, date and time for inauguration of such flights is yet to be finalised. In this connection, the Chinese authorities have suggested to concentrate on repairment of the Kabul airport runway and also some complexes for storage of the goods to be exchanged between the two countries.

The Chinese government agreed for exporting electronics, cosmetics, textiles, tyres and other rubber materials to Afghanistan through its cargo's. While in return, Afghanistan would export gems, carpets and rugs, green and dry fruits and wool and woolen products to China. In the light of such understandings, the Chinese authorities have also been agreed for utilising the mineral potentials of Afghanistan and for this purposes, it likely to go for establishing of some factories. Likewise, the Chinese authorities have also been agreed for extending cooperation to the Afghan government in rebuilding and reconstruction of that war affected country.

It may be mentioned here that trade links between Pakistan and Afghanistan was destabilised when in 1995 last, the previous Benazir Bhutto government imposed a ban on import of 17

items under the Afghan Transit Trade. Such items included mostly electronics, tyres and rubber goods, textiles and cosmetics. However, soon after imposition of such a decision, majority of the Afghan and Tribal traders have diverted their business first to Bandar Abbas of Iran for importing goods from Japan and other developed countries. And later on they utilised the Jalalabad airport for the purpose. The Taliban leaders in Peshawar while confirming such contacts have said that the delegates who visited Kabul at the end of previous January were included three males and one females.

Among them a Muslim businessman from China was prominent. Such a delegation held detail talks with high ranking Kabul authorities in connection with trade links between the two countries. While both the countries have already discussed the political matters included re-opening of the Chinese embassy at Kabul. In response to a question, the trader said that Peshawar in particular and rest of the country in general become an important export market due to the goods being imported from Afghanistan. Such items, the listed, are rugs, carpets, green and dry fruits, wools and woolen goods, gems and other minerals. On such items the local traders and exporters paying a lot to the CBR but it also engaged thousands of people.

# UN volunteers resume relief work in Afghanistan

Nation 990225

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – After a long time, the United Nations' volunteers have returned to Kabul for supervising the relief activities in Wardak and Logar provinces of Afghanistan.

The UN had evacuated its volunteers from Kabul, following the USA air strikes against the training camps near Khost on August 20, 1998 last. As a result of such air strikes, the Afghans staged demonstrations and attacked the UN office at Kabul which also caused death to a military observer from Italy.

The UN report, issued here Wednesday reveal that it along with other international agencies are sending relief supplies including shelter and food to the earthquake effectees of both the provinces away around 100 kilometres from

Kabul. Priority needs continue for shelter materials like plastic, tents, tarpauline and blankets. The WFP has sufficient stocks in hands and allocated wheat, beans and high energy biscuits to hundreds of the worst affected families.

The report further states that the UNICEF, UNHCR and Habitat have sent shelter materials and blankets to contribute to supplies being distributed by the Red Cross Movement. The WHO has been sending medical supplies to treat the injured and UNFPA has provided safe delivery kits. In addition, several other NGO's notably NPO, KJRC, NCA, ACLU, CARE, GAA and MEDAIR are assisting in the relief efforts.

Assessments on the extent of the area affected by the quake, registered between 5.5 and 5.9 on Richter scale,

continues as teams probe further into remote snowbound villages. After surveying 63 villages, international agencies estimate the number of heavily damaged and destroyed houses to be more than 5,800, meaning that at least 30,000 people are homeless. Ninety mosques were ruined, it remarked.

The casualty is currently estimated at 70 dead and some 500 wounded, low given the size of the earthquake since a tremor preceding the quake altered residents to flee their homes. However, more than 1,000 cattle, which share Afghan dwellings during the winter, were killed by collapsing structures. The UN is preparing an appeal for donor countries to be issued shortly after a full assessment of the scope damages, the areas affected and the needs of the residents has been completed.



# Taliban deny meeting Osama as mystery prevails

News 990226

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia on Thursday rejected as false a newspaper report that its officials had met Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden a few days ago.

A Taliban spokesman, quoted by a Pakistan-based Afghan news service, said the militia was unaware of Bin Laden's whereabouts and Wednesday's report in the London-based Saudi-owned newspaper al-Hayat that a Taliban delegation met him in the eastern Afghan town of Jalalabad was false.

Al-Hayat quoted "informed Afghan sources" as saying that the Taliban delegation, including Deputy Foreign Minister Mullah Abdul Jalil, visited Bin Laden in an effort to mend tense relations. "We know nothing about Osama's whereabouts," the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil as saying by telephone from the militia headquarters in the southern Afghan town of Kandahar.

"Mullah Abdul Jalil has not even visited Jalalabad in recent days. This is all untrue." The Taliban, which controls most of Afghanistan, said earlier this month that Bin Laden, who is wanted by the United States, had gone missing and that it had not bowed to US pressure for his extradition. His disappearance followed US warnings that it reserved the

right to use military force in pursuit of Bin Laden, who has been indicted in the United States for allegedly masterminding last August's bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Officials of an Afghan opposition alliance had said that Osama was still in Afghanistan and that reports to the contrary were a ploy to ease US pressure on the Taliban.—Reuters

AFP adds from Kabul: A senior Taliban official said Thursday the whereabouts of the anti-US Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden were still a mystery.

Deputy Interior Minister Mulla Khaksar Akhund told AFP the Islamic militia was annoyed that Bin Laden did not let them know of his plans three weeks ago. "We are annoyed because of this. He should have told us of his plan," Khaksar said. "We don't know whether he is still in Afghanistan or has left the country," the deputy minister said, recalling that Bin Laden went missing together with most of his family members after restrictions were imposed on him.

Asked if the Taliban wanted to try Osama, who is wanted by the United States over last year's bombings of two US embassies in east Africa, Khaksar said, "I cannot predict whether or not he will be tried."

## UN seeks aid for Afghan quake victims

News 990226

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations said on Thursday its agencies working in Afghanistan needed more resources to shelter some 16,000 families whose homes were destroyed or damaged this month by an earthquake.

A statement from the office of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan said the UN had pledged and other resources amounting to \$400,000. It said UN agencies were seeking an additional \$150,000 for tents, tarpaulins, blankets and plastic sheeting.

UN international staff withdrew from Afghanistan in August because of security concerns after a US missile strike on suspected bases of Osama bin Laden.

But the statement said a small number of UN international staff had been in the Afghan capital Kabul helping to coordinate the relief effort in quake-hit areas of Wardak and Logar provinces, some 100 km (60 miles) south of Kabul.

UN staff, Red Cross members and several NGOs had been bringing supplies, medical equipment and technical assessment teams to the area, where an estimated 40,000 people have been affected, it said.

The statement said more than 7,000 families had already received relief supplies, including tents, tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, blankets, jerry cans and medical supplies.—Reuters

## Opium prices coming down in Afghanistan

By AIMAL KHAN

990227

PESHAWAR — The opium prices are on the decline in Afghanistan following recent operation by Taliban troops against heroin laboratories in the country's eastern Nangrahar province, a senior Taliban official said here on Friday.

Mohammad Wali Nacemi, the Peshawar-based Afghan vice consul general, told *The Frontier Post* in an informal chat highlighted the significance of the operation and said as result of the steps taken by the Taliban administration, the area under poppy cultivation was expected to be reduced significantly.

In a rare move, the Taliban authorities recently destroyed 34 heroin-processing laboratories in Nangrahar province.

The laboratories were in operation in district Achin, Shinwar and Khogyani near the country's border with Pakistan.

According to United Nations Drug Control Programme estimates, Nangrahar is the second largest poppy growing region in Afghanistan with 17,822 hectares under poppy cultivation in 1998, while Helmand province has 30,673 hectares under the poppy crop.

Following the operation, the price of raw opium in the Afghan market has come down from Rs 6,000 per kilogram to Rs 4,000 per kilogram while that of refined opium from Rs 14,000 per kilogram to Rs 12,000.

Nacemi also counted the "tremendous" shrinking demand for opium in the Afghan market and believed that it would also indirectly affect the production of poppy in the country.

He claimed that because of Taliban's ban on use of narcotics, heroin addiction among the Afghans was significantly low.

Regarding ban on poppy cultivation, the Afghan diplomat said it was a very sensitive issue and without providing alternative sources of income, Taliban administration could not afford to take such a step.

He urged upon the international community to come forward and extend its support to Taliban government in its efforts to devise alternative income generating schemes for the people who have been relying on income from poppy crop for decades.

Afghanistan is in dire need of funds for the rehabilitation of its devastated physical infrastructure, he added.

Nacemi said Taliban were planning to undertake more such operations in other areas of the country.

# Turmoil forces Afghans to sell heritage on street

Nation 990301



Fatigued by the decades-old war and factional fighting in their motherland the Afghans have put their heritage on sale, which attract the buyers at Itwar Bazar.

ISLAMABAD (APP) — Decades of war and turmoil in Afghanistan has forced the Afghans to sell their heritage and family silver virtually for a song on the streets of Islamabad.

Foreigners living in Islamabad and tourists who generally show special interest in antiques and old artifacts are the usual customers. They pay handsome amounts for carpets and other articles. If you cross the nullah dividing Itwar (Sunday) Bazar close to Aabpara market you are lost in the quagmire of small make-shift shops and stalls sprawling the entire length of the street.

Full of antiques and handmade carpets, these stalls are mostly run by Afghans. Besides those who are settled in Islamabad, the Afghans come all the way from Peshawar on weekends to earn livelihood by selling their articles. Most of them earn from Rs 100 to Rs 200 in a day to live hard to mouth. There are others lucky and crafty who make maximum out of a bargain and earn upto two thousand rupees at the end of the day.

The vendors who come across the foreigners make a good fortune. There are other poor wretched fellows whom one pities. They have not much to offer to the customers.

Aziz, 75, has ten children to feed. Once an officer in the Telecommunications in Kabul, he left the war-ravaged city to settle in Peshawar five years back due to insecure conditions. He hardly earns over Rs 100 each Sunday by selling cards, rings and other small items.

Most of the carpet sellers appear healthy and affluent from their looks. Some shops have the high quality carpets costing upto Rs 100,000 to Rs 200,000 a piece. There are small carpets which can be termed as poorman's luxury and can be purchased from Rs 500 to Rs 3000 per piece.

One has to be a hard bargainer for buying a carpet. There is huge profit-margin in the trade. They may demand Rs 50,000 for a carpet but with patient and tactful haggling one can buy a medium size, good quality carpet for about Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000. The carpets mostly are brought from Afghanistan and Afghan refugee camps in NWFP and Iran. The articles described as antiques at the sale include coins, jewellery, headgear, old utensils, rare manuscripts, currency notes representing different regimes in Afghanistan, old stamps, glassware, flower pots, and decoration pieces.

A large number of old "Chensk" (tea

pots) and bowls made of China clay put on sale catch the eye of the customers. An old bearded Haji Mehr Din, who migrated from Mazar Sharif to Peshawar 18 years back has a lot of such colourful tea pots. Pointing towards one he claimed that it was made in Russia and was 120 years old. He showed the year and place of its make inscribed on it. He will not sell it for less than Rs 1,000. It might not be worth more than Rs 200 sans this tag.

All that glitters is not gold. Some insiders allege that most of the articles were not antiques and are locally manufactured.

One of the insiders confided to this scribe that there was a group of youngsters who had received training for polishing the glassware in Germany, producing multicoloured items for sale in these Bazaars. How do these articles make it to the Itwar Bazar in the Capital? An Afghan said that these are brought by "important" people. Some of the antiques were allegedly stolen from the museums and were sold from man to man for paltry sums. Those selling them now have no other source of earning. They sell these items to make a fortune or just for survival.

## Anti-Taliban forces capture strategic town

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Afghanistan's opposition forces have captured a key district in central Bamiyan province after fierce fighting with Taliban troops, the private Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Thursday.

It said Yawkowlang, about 100 kilometers west of the city of Bamiyan, fell to the anti-Taliban alliance after fighters from the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat factions launched a "surprise" attack Wednesday.

The opposition troops, who had taken refuge in the mountains after the Islamic militia's advance in the area in September, overran Taliban defences in three hours of fighting, the report said.

At least three people were killed and five injured, it said adding the Taliban launched a counter-offensive early Thursday and heavy fighting was still raging.

No independent confirmation of the report was immediately available.

A Taliban spokesman in Kandahar, base of the Islamic militia in southern Afghanistan, said he was "unaware" of any fighting in the central province, AIP said later.

Yawkowlang is an important town strategically located on the road linking the former Shiite stronghold of Bamiyan with western and northern Afghanistan.

AIP said fresh Taliban troops had been rushed to flush out the opposition and both sides were using heavy artillery.

Fighting has also erupted in the mountainous pass Darra-e-Sauf in northern Samangan and Daulat Shah district in Laghman province, it said without giving details.

The headline Taliban militia controls about 80 percent of Afghanistan while the opposition forces hold several northern provinces.

## Afghan opposition creates 40-member leadership council

Bureau Report  
News 990301

PESHAWAR: The Afghan opposition alliance on Sunday announced creation of a leadership council to pave the way for a parliament with representation of all groups and a broad front against the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan.

Radio Tehran monitored here said that leaders of anti-Taliban alliance including Jamiat-i-Islami of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, Junbish-i-Milli of Gen Rasheed Dostam, Hezb-i-Wahdat of Karim Khalili, Ittihad-i-Islami of Prof Rasool Sayyaf and Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami of Asif Mohsini met in the opposition-controlled Parwan province to agree on a new initiative against the Taliban.

It said that the participants agreed to create a forty-member leadership council comprising senior ranking leaders and pave the way for the formation of a 150-member parliament which would draw representatives from all the groups. It also agreed to form a broader front against the Taliban. The first meeting of the leadership council has been convened for March 16, the radio said.

# Taliban rivals give Rabbani govt new boost

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - The Northern Alliance Saturday decided on electing two members from each of the six component parties for induction into the Burhanuddin Rabbani government as ministers.

The decision came at a meeting of the rainbow anti-Taliban alliance held in the Afghan province of Parawan yesterday.

The concluding session of the meeting was attended by the six-member alliance grouping Jamiat-i-Islami, Ittihad-i-Islami, Hezb-i-Wahdat (Khalili Group), Harkat-i-Islami (Mohsini Group) and Hezb-i-Islami (Sabaoon Group).

Earlier sessions of the meeting among Taliban rivals were held in Charikar, Panjsher and Gulbahar under the chairmanship of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The Peshawar-based Sahar News Agency, meanwhile, reported that the following three major decisions were taken at the last session:

First, the next meeting of the six-party alliance will be held on March 15 and an interim *shoora*

comprising 150 dignitaries and like-minded members of other factions will be formed;

Second, a leadership committee of at least 40 members will be set up to guide the alliance on political matters and take important decisions, as and when necessary, after consultation;

Third, twelve ministries of the Rabbani government will swing into function by the middle of the month. The ministers to look after these portfolios will be appointed from the six-party alliance.

According to AFP, Afghan opposition formed a commission to establish a multi-party leadership council and a parliament in northern Afghanistan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

Quoting sources close to the key anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood, it said the leadership council would comprise 40 members drawn from opposition parties.

The opposition parties, after a series of meetings in Masood's held northern Parwan province,

also agreed to form a 150-member nominated parliament, it said.

The Pakistan-based AIP said the commission will hold its first session on March 17 in Afghanistan to finalise induction of prominent Afghan personalities in the leadership council.

It did not say who would head the commission.

Afghan analysts said the move was aimed at reorganizing the opposition alliance after a series of major setbacks suffered by member parties last year when Taliban troops overran key opposition strongholds in central and northern Afghanistan.

The Taliban, holding some 80 percent of Afghanistan, routed ethnic Uzbek general Abdul Rashid Dostam's party in northern Mazar-i-Sharif and flushed out a pro-Iran Shiite party, the Hezb-i-Wahdat, from central Bamiyan province.

Afghan sources said the move also follows recent warnings from Taliban chief Mulla Mohammad Omar that his troops would crush Masood forces.

# Secondary bacterial infection causes death of 200 people in northern Afghanistan

By DR KILABIR AHMAD  
PESHAWAR - Most of the 200 deaths that have occurred so far in a flu like epidemic in a remote, mountainous area in northern Afghanistan are from a secondary bacterial infection and not from the flu itself, medical experts said on Friday.

The culture of the throat specimens, taken from the victims of the disease, has yielded mainly three types of bacteria: streptococcus pneumoniae, staphylococcus aureus and Klebsiella.

"Sputum culture alone is less sensitive and false positive are always common."

They didn't sent us blood samples. They might have sent it to Geneva," said a microbiologist at National Institute of Health (NIH) Laboratory which received around 19 throat swabs from the epidemic hit area, last Tuesday (March 2). The viral examination will take around 2 weeks to be completed.

He said Dr Rana Graber, a public health experts at WHO Afghanistan when contact by The Frontier Post said: "Overcrowded living conditions, non-existent health care services, remoteness of

the area, absolute poverty, malnutrition, harsh climatic conditions....all these have played their part in making the "flu-like disease" fatal."

"All members of a household (from 7 to 20) of village Jamarche Bala are living in but one room. The nearest basic health facility is six days by foot in summer. Not only that, during winters the people of the area, subsist on nothing but bread and onion." She said adding that the availability and use of simple and cost-effective antibiotics by the disease-hit population could have saved dozens of lives.

The outbreak, which began around mid-January and which one month later became an international concern, was characterized by abrupt onset of fever, headache, pain and muscle pain, followed by chest pain and cough with scanty sputum.

The epidemic began in village Jamarche Bala after two young men returned from the village Waram to the south of Jamarche Bala, both suffering from an acute respiratory tract infection. They were housed by the village chief at his place. Over the next two days,

around 40 people living in the same and neighboring households became ill. Then mysterious diseases then hit almost 70-80 per cent of village's 5,400 population.

Two medical experts from WHO, Dr Thomas Grein and Dr Takai who had traveled to the epidemic hit, snow-bound area from February 26-28 concluded: "the outbreak, that is now on the decline was an influenza-like illness has affected a large proportion of the population. The rate of secondary complications (mainly pneumonia) was high. Unusually steep (for influenza) mortality rate was 1-2 per cent of the total population, primarily due to bacterial super infections and unavailability of antibiotics and overall poor living and nutritional conditions. Why this (flu) seems to be worse than previous years is not entirely clear-the laboratory may be able to give an answer."

The two experts pointed out that they had treated with success around 20 patients with a broad-spectrum antibiotic, Chloromphenicol and that they had informed the health authorities of their findings.

With no antibiotics available, the local population used a traditional medicine (a mixture of flour, pepper, onion, pea and yogurt to treat the unusual disease but they did not work, they added.

The experts also collected blood samples and throat swabs, which are being analyzed at NIH Islamabad and WHO's main Laboratory in Geneva.

The epidemic that has claimed so far around 135 lives in five villages of Jashak and over 60 in Jamarche Bala, was reported on February 13 to WHO which two weeks later sent an expert team to one of the epidemic-hit villages, Jamarche Bala. Other villages were visited by Medicines sans Frontiers and the Agha Khan Foundation.

According to the preliminary report the epidemic came from south (Tangshew, Kooshan), went through Jamarche Bala and on to Warfad and Jastak (north of Jamarche Bala). The disease has hit a total of five villages in the area of Maymei so far. The exact number of deaths has not been determined because of the harsh climatic conditions and remoteness of the area.

## Taliban give forcible haircut to youth

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban soldiers here Tuesday forced some two dozen youths to get a haircut, while the religious police beat women for showing their ankles, witnesses said. The soldiers herded 25 young men into a centre near the Ministry of Justice where barbers went to work on their heads, they said. "They took me inside and gave me a haircut without any explanation," Ahmad Jawid told AFP.

## Rabbani to head 'leadership council'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - The Afghan opposition has announced formation of a 40-member leadership council led by ousted president Buhauddin Rabbani, an opposition spokesman told the Afghan Islamic Press here on Tuesday.

He said the break-up of council members would be on ethnic basis, comprising 12 Pukhtoons, 10 Tajiks, 8 Hazaras and 10 members from other smaller ethnic groups.

He informed that the 150-member "parliament" announced earlier would comprised of nominees from the Taliban-controlled areas and elected representatives from the anti-Taliban controlled areas.

Elaborating the functions of the future parliament, the spokesman added, it would be responsible for framing the country's constitution and holding election for new president.

However, it was being apprehended that the formula of electing 40-member leadership council might not materialise as Pukhtoons form nearly 58 percent of Afghanistan's population whereas they have been allocated only 12 seats.

## Prisoners condition deplorable in Afghanistan

F.P. Report  
PESHAWAR - The head of the Afghan NGO, CO-operation Centre, Afghanistan, Mullah Habibullah Rafi, has said that the prisoners in the central Jail, Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan are leading an extremely deplorable life.

"There is neither food nor other basic facilities for them in the Jail," he told a press conference in Peshawar on Tuesday. "There is no proper record of the prisoners in the jail. All the prisoners were men and are deprived of all kinds of basic necessities," he added.

Giving details of his visit to the jail, Mullah Habibullah said that a 16-year old Amanullah had been sent behind the bars in a theft case while Muhammad Ibrahim, Allah Muhammad, Muhammad Yousaf Nasir, Ali Muhammad and three other persons had been arrested for drug smuggling, they said that they were arrested when they refused to give money to Haji Bashir.

"Their condition is extremely deplorable. They have only one blanket each. They are given only one bread a time," he said, adding that all these prisoners had been kept behind the bars without any trial. He asked the government to hold investigations into their cases and immediately release all of them. He also appealed to the international community and NGOs to help them in their hour of need.

# Afghan opposition involved in drug-trafficking

Fr 990303

By AEMAL KHAN

**PESHAWAR** - The heroin production and trafficking in Tajik warlord Ahmad Shah Masoud-controlled areas is flourishing unabated and some key anti-Taliban opposition leaders are reportedly involved in the business.

Reliable Afghan sources revealed here Tuesday that dozens of heroin-processing laboratories operating in the strategic Panjsher valley and other areas, allegedly owned by some of the close aides of Masoud.

Before the Taliban captured key provinces in northern Afghanistan, scores of heroin laboratories were in operation in Kunduz, Balkh and Faryab provinces, then controlled by the Uzbek warlord Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, the sources recalled.

In certain areas like Kunduz, the poisonous white powder was still being produced despite the Taliban's takeover of the area, the sources added.

According to OGD report, (a French organisation working on the geo-strategic impact of narcotics) poppy production in Badakhshan province rose from 22 to 50 tons in the period between 1994 and 1996.

Similarly, a latest report by the UNDCP says that since 1997 poppy crop also made appearance in certain new regions of the country, like Baghlan, Herat and

Balkh provinces in the northern and some parts of eastern Afghanistan.

The sources claimed that some well-connected smuggling networks, having links with international mafia groups especially in Central Asian states. Russia and Europe, were operating from the opposition-held areas in northern Afghanistan.

The sources, who recently returned from northern Afghanistan, confided to *The Frontier Post* that the income generated from the drugs smuggling was becoming a major source of financing the war-related activities of anti-Taliban forces.

The main air route, used for smuggling from Afghanistan to Central Asia and further to Russia and Europe is Panjsher (Kapisa province) and Taluqan (Takhar province) to Kulyab, Tajikistan, the sources said.

The land route for cross-border drug trafficking, the sources disclosed, was Panjsher-Shohab Munjan-Zebak-Ashkamish-Tajikistan. This route was being used by all the groups irrespective of their ideology for the export of opiates.

The number of drug traffickers arrested on the Tajik-Afghan border has grown over the past four years. Similarly, the quantities of seized drugs has also grown significantly.

Nikolai Bordyuzha, the head of

the Russian Border Guards service, on August 8 announced that 700 kg of drug coming from Afghanistan, including 100 kg of heroin, had been seized in the first half of 1998.

The air transport from Tajikistan to Panjsher and Taluqan, bringing supplies to Masoud-led forces carried consignments of drugs on their return to Tajikistan, from where these were being smuggled to the international markets, the source added.

Bulk of these illicit drugs were being transported to their destinations from Tajikistan either by road or by train while less than 25 per cent of the total were being sent by air.

The street value of one kilogram heroin in Badakhshan is about 3000 US dollar, the sources said adding that critical chemicals such as acetic anhydride, used in heroin-processing, reportedly came from India.

In close connivance with Tajik border guards, narcotics smuggling is on the rise, bringing fortunes to the opposition warlords.

"The drug mafia is so strong that because of its fear the border guards do not easily lay their hands on smugglers," these sources claimed.

There are even reports suggesting that the narco smugglers punished the non-cooperative guards by either targeting such guards or their family members.

## UN agencies fail to help quake-affected Afghans

Nafsun 990304

From Shanim Shahid

**PESHAWAR** - The United Nations agencies, operating in Afghanistan are lacking resources for the help of some 16,000 families who became homeless due to earthquake in February.

The UN report, issued here Wednesday reveals that the UN staff, members of the Red Cross Movement and several NGO's have been bringing supplies, medical equipment and technical assessment teams to the affected areas in both Wardak and Logar provinces of Afghanistan. The total population of the affected region is estimated at 400,000. More than 7,000 families have already received relief supplies including tarpaulines, plastic sheeting, blankets and medical supplies.

The UNICEF and the Norwegian

Church Aid have been assessing the overall health of the affected Population. The WHO and the Red Cross movement treated injuries early in the emergency operation. The government of Italy has donated medical kits, which will be distributed by the WHO. While food has not yet been deemed a priority, WFP has loaned a dozen trucks to the relief effort and some 40 tonnes of emergency food for severely affected families.

According to the reports, temperature still falls to freezing at night in the earthquake affected areas both south of Kabul and there is much concern about the risks of acute respiratory infection for those living in temporary shelters. The UN has pledged and other resources amounting to 0.3 million American dollars. Further, UN agen-

cies are seeking an additional aid of 0.250 million dollars for tents, tarpaulins, blankets and other materials to extend help to the earthquake affected people.

In response of the UN call, the government of Sweden has made a contribution of 0.750 million dollars for the protection of Afghan refugees in the neighbouring countries and for their repatriation in war-affected Afghanistan.

Apart from its operation in the earthquake-hit Wardak and Logar provinces of Afghanistan, the United Nations agencies have continued its relief operations in all over that country. Likewise, the report also highlight the achievements in reconstruction and rebuilding process of the war affected areas of Afghanistan.



FR 990311

## Fighting erupts in Afghan central district

ISLAMABAD (AFP)

Fighting erupted Wednesday in Afghanistan's central district of Yowkalang between the Taliban militia and a rival faction, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

It was the heaviest fighting in the area after a series of clashes between the Taliban and the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat over the past few weeks, the Pakistan-based private information service said.

The report, which could not be independently confirmed, said both sides were using heavy weapons in the battle, which came as Taliban and opposition representatives were to hold peace talks in Turkmenistan.

Yowkalang is in the Bamiliyan province which was taken by the Taliban from Hezb-i-Wahdat last year.

The region is populated mainly by the minority Hazara Shiite community.

Nation 990302  
From Our Correspondent

WASHINGTON—The Clinton Administration has 'decertified' Afghanistan for its non-cooperation with the United States in dealing with the drug problem, virtually accusing its ruling Taliban group of conniving with drug traffickers.

In its report, released here Friday, the U.S. Government (USG) says, 'some Taliban authorities reportedly benefit financially from the trade and provide protection to heroin laboratories. There are numerous reports of drug traffickers operating in Taliban territory with the consent or involvement of some Taliban officials.'

Under the U.S. law, decertification of a country exposes it to American economic sanctions.

It, however, says denial of certification does not cut off USG counter-narcotics assistance and would thus have minimal effect in terms of implementation of this policy.

Continuation of large-scale opium cultivation and trafficking in Afghanistan, plus the failure of the authorities to initiate law enforcement actions, preclude a determination that Afghanistan has taken adequate steps on its own or that it has sufficiently cooperated with USG counter-narcotics efforts to meet the goals and objectives of the 1988 UN Drug Convention, to which Afghanistan is a party.

Afghanistan and Burma are the only two countries, whom President Clinton

had denied certification this year.

Burma and Afghanistan supply over 90 per cent of the world's supply of opium poppy. In Burma, no noticeable inroads were made in 1998 against drug trafficking and production, and no major traffickers were arrested.

A US funded crop substitution programme was canceled, and a lack of enforcement against money laundering has created an environment conducive to the use of drug related proceeds in legitimate commerce, says the USG report.

In Afghanistan, cultivation increased by seven percent in 1998, without any significant action taken by warring political factions to deter either production or trafficking.

Burma and Afghanistan must do more to confront the powerful criminal elements trafficking in illicit drugs within their own borders who increasingly threaten communities everywhere with crime, violence, corruption, addiction, and disease, it says.

In 1998, poppy cultivation increased and spread to new areas. In an unverified policy statement published by the Taliban's High Commission for Drug Control on September 10, 1998, which appears to contradict the Taliban's November 1997 commitment to UNDCP, the Taliban indicated that they would not support a strategy of forced eradication if farmers who benefited from alternative development failed to comply with the requirement to abandon poppy cultivation.

A USG-sponsored poppy eradication/

alternative development program in Helmand Province through Mercy Corps International (MCI), an American NGO, continued this year. The USG strongly supports the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan and its efforts to achieve peace and facilitate the development of a broad-based government that respects international norms of behaviour on narcotics, terrorism and human rights.

The Afghan Support Group (ASG) of major donors to Afghanistan met twice during the year. At the meeting in Tokyo in December, the ASG endorsed the principle that counter-narcotics is a cross-cutting issue and should be integrated wherever possible with other programs in Afghanistan.

UNDCP agreed to include gender and human rights components in its counter-narcotics programmes wherever appropriate.

Afghanistan continued to be the world's second largest producer of opium poppy in 1998. Poppy cultivation and opium gum production increased by seven per cent in 1998, despite poor weather, resulting in an estimated 1,350 metric tons of opium gum production.

Afghanistan is a party to the 1988 U.N. Drug Convention, but neither of the warring political factions took steps to demonstrate that they take Afghanistan's obligations under the Convention seriously.

Aside from Taliban authorities burning a reported one ton of opiates in

# 'Taliban conniving with drug traffickers'

Jalalabad in June, there is no evidence to indicate that any action was taken by any faction to discourage poppy cultivation, destroy morphine or heroin laboratories, or arrest and prosecute narcotics traffickers.

Numerous reports indicated that members of all factions at all levels continued to profit from the drug trade. UN Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) initiatives made very slow progress, while a USG-funded non-governmental organisation (NGO) programme achieved many of its alternative development goals.

By the end of the year, the Taliban faction controlled over 80 per cent of Afghan territory and 96 per cent of Afghanistan's opium-growing areas. The Taliban's inaction and lack of political will, as well as substantial drug trade involvement on the part of some local Taliban authorities, also impede meaningful counter-narcotics progress.

The Taliban condemned illicit drug cultivation, production, trafficking and use in 1997. However, there is no evidence that Taliban authorities took action in 1998 to decrease poppy cultivation, to arrest and prosecute major narcotics traffickers, to interdict large shipments of illicit drugs or precursor chemicals, or to eliminate opiate processing laboratories anywhere in Afghanistan.

Opium is Afghanistan's largest cash crop and, by many estimates, narcotics remain a significant and perhaps the largest source of income.

# US threats holding up UN return to Afghanistan

News 990305

UNITED NATIONS: The US warnings that it may take further military action in Afghanistan to punish Osama bin Laden are partly responsible for holding up the return of UN staff to the country, diplomats said.

Washington has told the UN that it may not be able to warn the world body before hand if it launches another air campaign such as the August strikes on Laden's encampment in eastern Afghanistan, the diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The diplomats stressed that the UN has other security concerns with Afghanistan that are delaying the return of the UN after its seven-month absence from the country. But they said the recent US warning, contained in a six-point paper distributed to the UN in Islamabad, Pakistan and Geneva, was figuring into a decision on when and under what circumstances the UN would come back.

The UN withdrew its international staff from Afghanistan on August 22, a day after an Italian UN military adviser was shot and killed in the Afghan capital Kabul.

The slaying was believed to have been retaliation by the Taliban for the August 20 US air strikes on a suspected terrorist training camp run by bin Laden in eastern Afghanistan.

Washington has said it was acting in self-defence, claiming Laden was behind the twin bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people. The UN has demanded guarantees and proof from Afghanistan's Taliban militia that they are making progress on their investigations into the killing of the Italian adviser and two other UN workers slain in July, before returning international staff to the country.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan told reporters that he would have an announcement within the next week to 10 days about the UN return — indicating a limited UN presence in the country was imminent.

UN officials are finalising a strategy paper about the UN return, setting out a small-scale resumption of work for UN staff from March to June based on priorities of what is most needed in the country, diplomats said.—AP

## First UN official back in Kabul

News 990315

KABUL: A senior United Nations official arrived in the Afghan capital Sunday, putting a formal end to a seven-month boycott of the war-ravaged country by the UN's international staff. "I am very happy to be here ... The United Nations' international staff is officially back in Afghanistan with my arrival," Michael Sackait, director of the UN's Afghanistan operations, told reporters at the dilapidated Kabul airport.

The United Nations evacuated its foreign staff from Afghanistan last August 21 after an Italian UN worker

was shot and killed in Kabul in apparent retaliation for an attack by the United States on August 20 on alleged terrorists camps run by Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

Sackait said he will meet the Taliban officials during his two-day stay in Kabul in part to discuss food supplies to the poorest in the city. "We want to help the Afghans ... and will try to find out what kind of assistance they need?" "This winter has been tough for them in the absence of foreign aid workers. We have reports the food prices have soared."

The Taliban have formed special security councils in five major cities, where the United Nations is expected to eventually return with foreign workers. Those places are Kabul, Herat in western Afghanistan, Kandahar in the south, Jalalabad in the east and Mazar-i-Sharif in the north.

Sackait said the foreign staff of the UN organisations like the World Food Programme and United Nations' High Commission of Refugees will soon return to Afghanistan. The UN plans a gradual return of its foreign staff to Afghanistan.—AP

## Taliban term US human rights report an attack on Islam

News 990308

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban militia Sunday dismissed a US report on human rights violations in the war ravaged country as an attack on Islamic beliefs.

A foreign ministry statement also reiterated the Islamic militia did not allow and would never allow use of its soil for terrorist activities.

It said the issues raised in the report regarding human rights in the 80 per cent of the country under Taliban control showed the "subjectivism" of the US State Department.

The State Department report last month, part of a global annual survey on human rights, said

Afghanistan had perhaps the most severe abuses of women's rights in the world.

It also criticised the Taliban for publicly beating women who failed to wear the all-enveloping "burqa" garment which covers the entire head and body, and for not being accompanied by a close male relative outside the home.

It accused the Taliban of "devastating disregard for physical and psychological health of women and girls" including drastically limiting access to medical services.

"Nobody is allowed to point the finger of criticism to the implemen-

tation of the Islamic principles in Afghanistan," the Taliban statement said, adding "such criticism is considered as an attack on the Muslims' beliefs".

Rejecting the alleged violation of women's rights by the militia as unjustifiable, the statement said the Taliban "respects women" and wanted their "dignity protected".

Advising the State Department to focus on the "existing realities in our society", it stressed under the present conditions women rights in Afghanistan had been "restored" to a degree Islam and Afghan traditions allowed.—AFP

# Kabul residents living under night curfew for 21 years

KABUL (AFP) - After 21 years living under a night curfew, Kabul residents now wryly say it no longer bothers them as the days have become as colourless as the nights.

The ruling Taliban militia offers little hope of relief in the restrictive regime despite improved security.

The Islamic militia, which took the Afghan capital in 1996, has forbidden music, cinema, television and outdoor weddings, besides tabooing anything that smacks of Western culture.

"In this mute and dark city, a curfew is no longer of any significance as we do not have a cinema or a concert and even parks to go to," said Fahim Ahmad, a civil engineer in a housing complex.

"The people are depressed and hungry and their only concern is how to feed their families," he said.

The curfew was announced on the first night after pro-Moscow communist groups took power in Kabul in April 1978.

Dubbed as 'quyood-i-shabgardi' the night curfew from 09:00 p.m. to 05:00 a.m. has been enforced without break since then.

"It has become a habit with us. We think everyone else outside Afghanistan lives the same way," said Mohammad Farid, a young tailor.

"After the sun goes down something from inside tells me to rush home before the quyood comes into effect."

The curfew paralyses life. As the streets have no lights, residents prefer to lock themselves inside their homes — often two hours ahead of the restrictions. They tune into foreign radio stations to know what is

happening outside their homeland. Heavily armed and turbaned Taliban fighters riding in Japanese pick-up vehicles patrol the main streets and residential quarters.

In case of medical emergencies and accidents people can go out but with special permission.

And if farmers want to irrigate their land in the countryside they must carry a lantern to avert any Taliban action.

Fighting has been raging in Afghanistan for the past 20 years. After the 1979-1989 Soviet invasion, a civil war has gripped the northern regions.

Deputy Interior Minister Mulla Khaksar, admitting the curfew is a legacy of the previous communist government, voiced the hope it would be lifted once peace is fully restored.

"We hope to lift this restriction once there is full security and peace in the country," Khaksar said. He could not say when his prediction is forbidden in Islam.

Some residents consider curfew vital for their safety, fearing burglary and theft despite Taliban efforts to improve law and order.

A teacher, Abdul Wasay, said Afghanistan might need it for another 20 years. If people are free at night the crime rate would rise, he observed.

The governor of Kabul recently set up a commission to recheck particulars of all Taliban troops operating in the city and purge it of 'dubious characters'.

Officials said the move followed speculation that some people in the administration might have had a hand in recent thefts in Kabul and its suburbs.

## Distribution of 1,350 acres of land among non-locals Taliban decision sparks unrest in Nangarhar

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - The Taliban administration's decision of allotting state property to the non-locals in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province, bordering Pakistan, has caused discontent and anger among the locals.

An informed sources, who recently returned from the war-ravaged country, told this scribe here on Friday that the Taliban authorities in Nangarhar had decided to distribute 1,350 acres of land at Chor Guli-Daag, near the provincial capital of Nangarhar, situated on the strategic Jalalabad-Torkham highway.

The proposed land, stretching from Omerkheh checkpoint to Barikoh Bridge would be allotted to about 600 families from Logar and Paktia provinces. These families mainly comprise traders and pro-Taliban commanders.

The importance and value of the land could be gauged from the fact that it lies on the main supply route to commercially important cities of Jalalabad and the Pakistani border town of Torkham.

The acting president in the Taliban administration, Maulvi Kabir, who himself belongs to Logar province and a prominent Jehadi commander from Paktia were reportedly behind this decision.

The locals claimed that the said land belonged to them and the Taliban had no right to distribute it among the non-locals just for furthering their political interests.

The local tribal chiefs, especially from districts Batikot, Sheshahi and Hazarabuz, reportedly held their meetings to decide their future line of action vis-à-vis the Taliban decision.

"This decision is not acceptable to us and we will not allow anyone to distribute our land among their cronies," confided a Peshawar-based affectee.

"If not reverted, the decision could invite the anger of the locals and will provide a golden chance to the opposition to exploit the situation," added the source.

The source claimed that the furious locals had warned the Taliban authorities, especially Maulvi Kabir, to take back their decision or otherwise they will meet the same fate as of Haji Abdul Qadeer, the former governor Nangarhar.

The locals appealed to the Taliban movement's founder Mullah Mohammad Omar Mujahid, to review the decision.

It was also expected that a delegation will soon meet the Taliban leadership in this regard.

# \$2 million US fund for demining Afghanistan

Nation 990312

By Nafees Takkar

ISLAMABAD - United States has allocated two million dollars for demining operations in Afghanistan for the current fiscal year.

US Ambassador Donal Steinberg, Special Representative for Global Humanitarian Demining, and Robert Beecroft, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs, said Thursday the funds for Afghanistan would not be utilized on government to government level. They said the US assistance to Afghanistan for demining purposes would be made through United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) as the US did not recognise the Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

The two US officials were talking during a "Dialogue" programme shown Thursday evening on the website. Direct questions were put from three stations including Peshawar, Oman and Cairo.

Beecroft said US could not sign the Ottawa Treaty at the moment due to difficult situation on the ground. He said the US had a worldwide responsibility and would sign the treaty by 2006 after US would achieve the ability to counterbalance the possible North Korean attack. The US officials said meanwhile US would give full attention to research on producing alternative technologies to replace the anti-personal mines.

Steinberg said US had destroyed 3.3 million anti-personal mines during

1996-98. He said they were also seeking assistance of other countries to destroy the mines, which they said target the civilian population.

The Special Representative for Global Humanitarian Demining said that demining would be achieved in the US and around the world by the year 2010. He said they were working on a number of areas to eliminate the mines. These areas, he said, included mine awareness programmes, making surveys of the worst victim areas, training of deminers, support for NGOs and social rehabilitation of the mines' victims.

The two US officials discussed the situations in respect of threat from mines with particular emphasis on Afghanistan, Egypt and Jordan.

They said \$1.5 million were allocated for mines clearance in Egypt for the year 1999. Similarly \$1.9 million had been allocated for Jordan to overcome the mines problem in that country. In Egypt, they said, so far 11 million mines had been destroyed. The demining operations in Jordan, they said, would be made a model for the rest of the countries. In Afghanistan, Steinberg, said US had spent \$20 million since 1993 in demining operations.

The US government, they said, had allocated \$10 million for the support of projects assisting mines' victims. They said that apart from providing medical assistance, social rehabilitation and economic crisis of the families of the victims were also a problem throughout the mines' victim areas. They put the total mines' victims across the world at about 300,000.

## Taliban reject coalition govt with rivals

KABUL (NND) - Supreme leader of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Mulla Omar has rejected the idea of coalition government with the opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood, saying other factions would also demand share in power if one group was given representation.

"If we form coalition government with Masood, other groups too would demand representation for all the opponents in the government," Taliban radio Shariat quoted Omar as telling the UN envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi.

"Accommodating every commander in the government would mean disturbing it," Omar told Brahimi, who met Taliban's leader in Kandahar.

Brahimi, leading a five-member UN delegation, flew into Kandahar and held extensive talks with Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar in a move to secure date and venue for the next round of talks between Afghan warring factions.

## Masood sets terms for renouncing war

From Dr JASSIM TAQUI

ISLAMABAD - Ahmad Shah Masood, the warlord fighting the Taliban militia in Northern Afghanistan, is now demanding half a million dollar per month to stop fighting and to engage in the peace process, a confidant of the Taliban said here.

The source said that Masood was taking half a million dollar from India as a price of continuing the civil war in Afghanistan. "Now, Masood wants a compensation for his lost income," the source said.

According to the Taliban, Ahmad Shah Masood was compelled to hold peace talks with the militia since many of his field com-

manders showed dismay at continuing fighting and killing fellow Afghans. Among those who are now opposing Masood his field commander Fahim.

Taliban militia also suspects the intentions of Ahmad Shah Masood since he continues to fight even during talks. It has an apprehension that Masood's acceptance of peace might be a tactical move to win time before a major Taliban attack on the remaining areas controlled by the Northern Alliance, which would be launched in the coming summer.

While welcomed as a major step towards lasting peace, the deal between Taliban and Ahmad Shah Masood fell short for an immediate

ceasefire and left many questions as to how power would be shared unanswered.

On the prospect of peace talks, Taliban militia maintains that under no circumstances it would compromise its Islamic orientation. "Islamic system in Afghanistan is an irreversible process. No power on earth can reverse this. And Taliban made it very clear to the UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi that if he planned to bring secular forces to appease the United States or India, there would be no deal with Taliban," the source added.

On power sharing, the Taliban said that the militia would not surrender more than 10 per cent to

Masood. It also rejected to share power with other components of the Northern Alliance; since they do not control any area." For the Taliban, the agreement was agreed on with Ahmad Shah Masood and did not mean that a coalition government would be formed in the future.

Masood led a powerful, mainly ethnic Tajik guerilla force for years in the fight against the Soviet occupation, and several attempts to drive him from his lair in the Panjshir Valley, northeast of Kabul, failed.

His forces are in the northern opposition coalition alliance, which controls little of the country after a major summer offensive by the Taliban last year.

# Taliban need to do more to curb opium production

News 990315

## Rahimullah Yusufzai

**T**he latest report of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) declaring Afghanistan as the primary source of opium in the world after having overtaken Burma was made public on February 23. A few days earlier, by chance or by design, the ruling Taliban announced dismantling of 34 heroin-manufacturing laboratories in Nangrahar province in eastern Afghanistan. A group of Western, Pakistani and Afghan journalists was taken to the Khugyani and Achin districts close to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border where the laboratories were sited to convince the world that the Taliban were serious in their anti-narcotics campaign. Though the Taliban efforts on this count haven't gone unnoticed and the UNDCP officials in the field termed it a breakthrough, they are being asked to do more to curb opium production in Afghanistan and stop the flow of drugs to the Western countries.

According to the UNDCP report, the production of raw opium in Afghanistan in 1998 rose nine per cent from the previous year to 2,200 metric tonnes with the planted areas covering 63,000 hectares. While releasing the 1998 report, UNDCP's Bernard Frahi said in Islamabad that Afghanistan remained the world's primary source of opium with production rising and a substantial increase in trafficking through neighbouring countries. He felt Afghanistan could now be making all the illegal heroin that formerly came from Pakistan. Those familiar with the business of drug-trafficking said most of the heroin manufactured in Afghanistan is smuggled to Pakistan for onward delivery or sent to Europe via Iran or through the Central Asian republics and Russia. The chemicals used in heroin manufacturing are available in Pakistan while one of the main ingredients, acetic anhydride, comes from India and Germany.

Unlike Afghanistan where the opium pro-

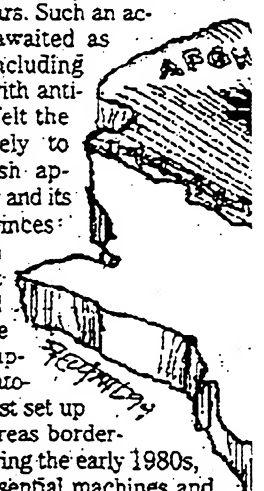
duction is rising, the UNDCP report noted the marked change in the situation in Pakistan where only 25 tonnes of opium was produced in 1998 compared to 800 tonnes in 1979. The opium production in Pakistan was forecast to drop to five tonnes this year, prompting Frahi to comment that Islamabad was on track to eliminate heroin production. The credit for interdicting drugs in Pakistan was also being claimed by the Anti-Narcotics Force, which is now managed by serving army officers.

Apart from facing criticism with regard to their policies concerning women's rights, girls' education and sheltering Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden who has been indicted on terrorism charges in the US, the Taliban have come under increased pressure to ban poppy-cultivation in Afghanistan and adopt a tougher policy against narcotics trafficking. The Taliban leaders have been reiterating that it wasn't possible to impose a ban on poppy-cultivation until alternative sources of livelihood were made available to the poor Afghan farmers. The Afghan authorities, both Taliban and their Mujahideen predecessors, often complained about the failure of the international community, especially the UN, to fulfil commitments made to the Afghan growers. Economic needs, lawlessness and better returns prompted the Afghan farmers to increasingly turn to poppy-cultivation and areas where the crop was never grown are now reporting an increase in land acreage under poppy. With the crackdown on poppy farmers and heroin-manufacturers in Pakistan in recent years, the area of operation of those running heroin laboratories and organising drug-trafficking gradually shifted to Afghanistan, mostly to mountainous areas near the porous Afghanistan-Pakistan border. In fact, some of the heroin-manufacturing units were operating even during Mujahideen rule and opium production was on the rise prior to Taliban takeover of most of Afghanistan. Though the Taliban have taken long to dismantle the 34 heroin laboratories in eastern

Afghanistan and were unable to apprehend its owners, most of whom were stated to be Pakistani tribesmen, the tough action must have sent a strong message to those still carrying out the narcotics business on the Afghan soil. The supreme Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has already issued a decree ordering dismantling of the "hidden nests which convert opium gum into heroin." According to Abdul Hamid Akhundzada, high commissioner for drug control in Afghanistan, it wasn't a one-time operation as a similar action was currently under way in Kandahar, Nimruz and Helmand, which is the biggest opium-producing province in Afghanistan.

**A**khundzada said the Taliban were in particular targeting the triangle where Afghanistan meets Pakistan and Iran and where drug-trafficking has been flourishing in recent years. Such an action was keenly awaited as many people, including those associated with anti-drugs campaign, felt the Taliban were likely to adopt a less harsh approach in Kandahar and its neighbouring provinces where the Taliban Islamic Movement was founded and where it draws some of its strongest support. Heroin laboratories, which were first set up in NWFP's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan during the early 1980s, consist of a few essential machines and utensils which can be easily accommodated in a small room. It thus isn't difficult for the operators of these laboratories to shift them to safer, inaccessible places in the mountains in case of danger.

Journalists who were taken by the Taliban to the remote Ouch Bandar area to see the dismantled laboratories didn't see much



## Afghan factions clash despite peace accord

News 990319

**ISLAMABAD:** Afghanistan's Taliban militia and troops loyal to rival commander Ahmad Shah Masood have fought battles in Parwan province north of Kabul, five days after reaching an accord to negotiate a peaceful settlement of their conflict, a report said here Thursday.

Quoting an unidentified anti-Taliban alliance spokesman, the private Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) information service said the clashes occurred late Wednesday in the Ghorband valley after the dominant militia launched an attack capturing two posts.

The spokesman said Masood's troops in a counter-offensive regained the posts Thursday, it added.

The rival troops were engaged in an exchange of tank and artillery fire around the nearby Masood-held town of Jababul Siraj, AIP said.

Several soldiers on both sides had been killed and wounded in the clashes, it said.

The clashes followed Sunday's UN-mediated agreement between the Taliban and opposition representatives in the Turkmen capital of Ashkabad. The two sides had agreed in principle to set up a shared executive, judiciary and legislature, as well as to

work out details at future negotiations.

UN officials have said the next round of talks is likely in April in Kabul at UN premises.

Analysts have expressed scepticism about the negotiations leading to a final settlement of the 20-year Afghan civil war as the Taliban, controlling about 90 percent of the country, were reluctant to form a coalition government.

Taliban chief negotiator Wakil Ahmad said in Kabul on return from Ashkabad that the agreement did not mean a coalition government would be established in Afghanistan.

He also said the question of leadership had already been decided by the Taliban in a principled way and was not a subject for bargaining.

The Taliban have proclaimed Afghanistan an Islamic emirate, with its chief Mulla Mohammad Omar as ruler.—AFP



# Taliban need to do more to curb opium production

News 990315

as the operation had already been carried out and the 14 labourers working there were in Taliban custody. The trial of the workers hasn't started yet and in any case the Taliban won't get much out of them as the factory-owners, all stated to be Afridi tribesmen hailing from the adjacent Pakistani tribal areas, had fled. Apparently, they got wind of the Taliban action and were able to make good their escape. Though the ruling Taliban have been under growing pressure to initiate steps to

failed to mention that twice the Taliban supremo Mulla Omar had offered to ban poppy-cultivation in return for international recognition for his government and provision of alternative sources of livelihood for the Afghan farmers.

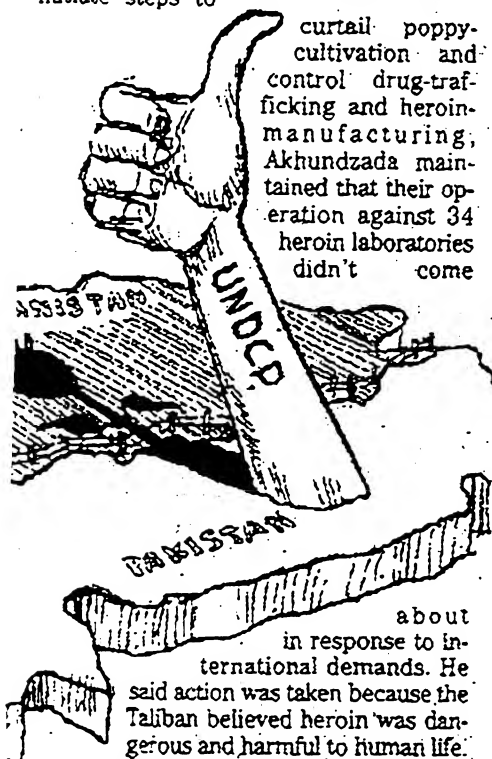
**T**he Afghans have been critical of the international community for failing to assist them to rebuild their war-ravaged country. People like Akhundzada and other Taliban leaders have often complained that the world had been slow in helping the Taliban to control drug-trafficking and provide treatment and rehabilitation facilities to the addicts. The Taliban now say that much depended on the outcome of the three UNDCP pilot crop-substitution projects being implemented in Kandahar and Nangrahar provinces to lure poppy growers to grow other profitable crops. The Taliban, like most Afghans, believe the farmers would happily give up poppy-cultivation if provided alternative means of livelihood.

The UNDCP, on its part, has hailed the Taliban action against heroin laboratories. Muhammad Naseeb, UNDCP's programme officer in Jalalabad, described it as a major breakthrough and felt that the Taliban meant business. He explained that the Taliban had given assurances to help reduce poppy-cultivation by 50 per cent next year and bring it down to zero level by the year 2000.

However, the US government, which attaches more importance to the Bin Laden issue than narcotics, still isn't impressed by the Taliban resolve to combat drugs. It recently "decertified" Afghanistan on account of its non-cooperation with Washington in dealing with the drug problem. Under the US law, decertification of a country exposes it to American economic sanctions. However, denial of certification doesn't cut off US government counter-narcotics assistance and

would thus have minimal effect in terms of implementation of this policy. It would also keep open the option of US assistance to further influence Taliban's anti-narcotics policies. Afghanistan and Burma were the only two countries which were denied certification by the US this year and the American report on the subject virtually accused the Taliban of conniving with drug-traffickers. "Some Taliban authorities reportedly benefit financially from the trade and provide protection to heroin laboratories. There are numerous reports of drug-traffickers operating in Taliban territory with the consent or involvement of some Taliban officials," alleged the report. However, it didn't provide specific examples showing Taliban involvement in the narcotics trade. Afghanistan is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention but years of war and lack of a central authority meant that neither of the warring factions was in a position to take concrete steps to demonstrate that they take Afghanistan's obligations under the said convention seriously.

The Taliban, however, did burn a reported one tonne of opiates in Jalalabad in June last year and imposed a ban on cultivation and trafficking of charas (hashish). But they haven't been able to do much to curb poppy-cultivation, which remains a source of livelihood for a rapidly growing number of farming families. As of now, opium has become Afghanistan's largest cash crop and, by many estimates, narcotics remain a significant and perhaps the largest source of income. The Taliban leaders continue to admit that cultivation, use and sale of drugs is un-Islamic and the practice ought to be curbed but, at the same time, they cite pressing economic needs as the major reason why poppy-cultivation cannot be banned until the growers are provided alternative sources of livelihood. The happenings across the border, including opium and heroin production and drug-trafficking, invariably affect Pakistan. Thus the opium war would continue in this part of the world for quite some time.



about in response to international demands. He said action was taken because the Taliban believed heroin was dangerous and harmful to human life. He said poppy-cultivation cannot be outlawed in one go as the people to be affected would face problems in absence of other means of livelihood. Though Akhundzada stressed that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan would continue to implement its anti-narcotics policy even if there was no assistance by the international community, he

## Breakdown in Kabul basic living conditions

News 990319

KABUL (AFP) - The UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) has found 'horrendous' evidence of a breakdown in basic living conditions in Kabul, a UN special rapporteur said Thursday.

Kamal Hossain said evidence would be included in his report on human rights violations within Afghanistan as defined by International Humanitarian Law governing killing, torture and inhumane treatment.

'In Kabul you see the enormous destruction that has taken place and the destruction of the physical things and of lives, and the ordinary life of people,' he told reporters.

'The impact on education on health on malnutrition ... I've been looking at all the socio-indicators and they are really horrendous.'

Hossain will release an abridged version of his report in April and a fuller report in October.

He said several issues had arisen since the UNHRC's last report was released in August, 1998.

These included the massacre of ethnic Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif after the Taliban took control of the city last August. Human rights groups claim between 5,000 and 8,000 civilians were killed.

Other issues encompass recent peace talks, the killing of UN staff, and the murder of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif which pushed Tehran to the brink of war with Afghanistan in the second half of 1998. 'You have to see

it in the context of 20 years of conflict, you can see the scars and the continuing effects,' he said.

'It is men, women and children who have been the victims of this conflict and there have been massive human rights violations as a result.'

'The beggars on the streets — and for the rest of the country what you hear about is the conflict is not yet over and then you hear about the rocket attacks on Kabul itself,' he said of his investigations.

Asked whether his report would have a direct impact on ambitions by the ruling Taliban to obtain international recognition, he said:

# UN optimistic of early Afghan truce

— says power-sharing deal not discussed in Ashgabad

F.P. Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD • United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UN SMA) Tuesday hoped that the warring Afghan factions would soon agree on a cease-fire. "They are expected to hold more talks next month, preferably somewhere inside Afghanistan."

At the UN-brokered Ashgabad peace parleys, the Afghan interlocutors had not discussed *taqseem-i-qudrat* (power-sharing), the UNSMA official said at a news conference here.

Andrew Tesoriere explained that representatives of the Taliban government and the northern-based opposition alliance had, in fact, agreed on shared institutions, including the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

"We expect there would be substantial progress towards the restoration of peace to the war-weary country," he said, though agreeing with a questioner that the negotiators had not signed a cease-fire agreement.

The UNSMA's acting head added that the belligerent groups had expressed "flexibility" in the



dialogue process. The current (level of) hostility among the groups is not so high."

Andrew Tesoriere went on to dilate that the Afghan foes had not signed a cease-fire but "all issues, including a truce, were negotiated in detail."

The United Nations envoy, in reply to a query, said that the military aspect of the Afghan conflict did not come up for discussion at the three-day peace talks held in the Turkmen capital.

Asked about Pakistan's role in bringing the Afghans to one platform, Andrew Tesoriere eulogised the efforts being made by Islamabad to create an atmosphere of peace in the neighbouring country.

In a brief on the Ashgabad dialogue, he recalled that the two sides had agreed to form a shared executive, a shared legislature and a shared judiciary. "This is a major breakthrough."

"Both sides agreed to release 20 prisoners each as soon as possible through the ICRC," the UN envoy said, adding that the Taliban government and opposition forces had expressed their willingness to continue the dialogue for resolving other issues as well to implement the decisions already taken."

He told the newsmen that the de-militarisation question had not been on the agenda for the Ashgabad talks, "which were held in an atmosphere of sincerity, flexibility and good humour."

There, however, were lengthy deliberations on the representation of the various ethnic Afghan groups in the future set-up, he concluded.

## Brahimi fails to secure time frame for future talks from Taliban

ISLAMABAD: The UN Afghan envoy Lakhdar Brahimi has failed to secure a time frame, for the next round of peace talks, from ruling Taliban militia, whose supreme leader said a decision in this regard would be taken after consultations with militia's Shura members, scholars and Jehadi commanders.

"Amir-ul-Momineen Mulla Mohammad Omar told Brahimi that the Taliban will hold talks with Ahmed Shah Masood's group if the Shura, ulama and commanders favoured it," a senior Taliban diplomat who attended the talks told NNI on Wednesday.

Brahimi, leading a five-member UN delegation, flew to the southern town of Kandahar the same day and held extensive talks with Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar in a move to secure dates and

venue for the next round of talks between Afghan warring factions. Several Taliban officials including Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan also took part in the talks, which lasted more than three hours.

Taliban and their rival factions agreed in their talks in Ashgabad earlier this month to form a coalition government and hold next round of talks inside Afghanistan after Eid Kurban.

"I cannot decide about the negotiations with Masood's faction. I will only float my suggestions in the proposed meeting of Shura, religious scholars and commanders and they would be the real authority to decide," the diplomat quoted Omar as having categorically told Brahimi-led UN team.

The diplomat also quoted Mullah Omar as having reminded Brahimi of

the fact that Masood had expressed willingness to accept the leadership of Afghan Islamic Emirate and to limit talks only to the release of prisoners and cease-fire. But later Masood backed out of his commitment and demanded power sharing.

"We are ready to release all Masood's men but the decision for more talks with him would be made after consultations," the Taliban official quoted Omar as telling Brahimi.

However, Omar said Taliban would not release the prisoners of Khalili, Dostam and Malik because these "people have not any existence in Afghanistan". He told Brahimi that Masood should not insist on the release of the prisoners of other groups.

The Taliban official said that Mulla Omar conveyed his regret over the detention of Taliban's 95 prisoners,

who according to him, were handed over to Masood by Iran. "We had freed all Iranian prisoners on humanitarian grounds at the request of Brahimi but Iran handed over our prisoners to Masood," the Taliban official quoted Omar as complaining to Brahimi.

He said Brahimi told the Taliban supreme leader that the United Nations favours continuation of talks and wants that dates and venue should be decided for the next round. However, he could not succeed in his move, which would jeopardise the next round of talks.

The UN envoy held talks with the leaders of Afghan opposition in Taloan, the capital of Takhar province on Tuesday and discussed with them issues concerning the next round of talks.—NNI

# US, UK nationals still not allowed to work in Kabul

News 990319

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Though the UN's international staff has started returning to Afghanistan after a seven-month boycott of the Taliban-ruled country, American and British staffers of the UN are still not allowed to work in Afghanistan due to security reasons.

The UN's first foreign worker returned to Kabul on March 14, putting a formal end to the boycott that began on August 21 last year when an Italian staffer of the UN was shot and killed in the Afghan capital and his colleague, a Frenchman, was wounded. They were fired at apparently in retaliation for an attack by the US a day before on military training camps run by Saudi dissident, Osama Bin Laden, in Khost in southern Afghanistan. All foreign staff of the UN were evacuated from Afghanistan and its Afghan workers were left to run and maintain UN offices.

Incidentally, the UN's international staff started returning to Afghanistan after the end of the boycott the same day on which the Taliban and the opposition Northern Alliance reached an agreement in UN-sponsored talks in Turkmenistan's capital, Ashkhabad, to exchange prisoners and form a shared executive, shared legislature and shared judiciary.

The UN decided to allow its international staff to return to Afghanistan following assurances by the ruling Taliban to expedite investigations into the murder of the Italian UN worker and punish the murderers. The Taliban had earlier invited the UN to send its lawyers and investigators to probe the murder. The Taliban had earlier announced that two Pakistani Taliban suspected of involvement in the murder had been arrested. During investigation, the two had denied that they had a hand in the murder.

Though the UN has now decided on gradual return of its foreign staff to Afghanistan, it is still not willing to allow its American and British workers to enter the Taliban-ruled country. There is a feeling in UN circles that nationals of the US and UK risk attacks in Afghanistan owing to the ongoing US-British aerial attacks on Iraq and their likely fallout in Islamic countries.

A UN spokesperson in Islamabad, in an interview with the BBC Pashto service Thursday, confirmed that Americans and Britons employed by the UN were not being sent to Afghanistan due to security reasons.

However, she termed it as a temporary step and said replacements were being found for the American and British UN workers who cannot work in Afghanistan. She had no answer when asked as to why Andrew Tesoriere, a British national who is deputy head of the United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan (UNSMIA), had been undertaking visits to that country.

## Taliban start looking for heroin laboratories

News 990313

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Afghanistan's top anti-narcotics official has said the Taliban have started looking for heroin-manufacturing laboratories in the triangle where his country borders Pakistan and Iran.

"Our men have already done a survey of suspected places in Kandahar province and in parts of Helmand province in southwestern Afghanistan. We didn't find any heroin factory there," said Mulla Abdul Hameed Akhundzada, high commissioner for drugs control, in an interview with The News in Peshawar.

Akhundzada was on a visit to Pakistan to attend a meeting in Islamabad with UNDCP officials and drug liaison officers and representatives of 16 embassies, including the USA, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Saudi Arabia and UAE. Officials of the Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force also attended the March 10 meeting which focused on Afghanistan.

According to Akhundzada, the most likely places where heroin-making laboratories could be operating in

Afghanistan were Chotto, Girdi Jan-gal and other border areas in the triangle where his country meets Pakistan and Iran in Helmand and Nimruz provinces. He said the vast deserts in the border region were remote and difficult to control but still every effort would be made to dismantle the heroin factories and apprehend drug-traffickers.

Akhundzada claimed the Islamabad meeting expressed satisfaction on Taliban efforts to root out heroin-manufacturing facilities in Afghanistan and track down and punish drug-traffickers. He said the meeting in particular appreciated the recent Taliban action in Nangrahar province in eastern Afghanistan to dismantle 34 heroin laboratories and assured assistance to his country in its fight against drugs. He said that the 14 Afghan labourers arrested during the operation against the heroin factories in Nangrahar were still under investigation and their cases would be sent for trial in courts in the near future. He said his government was in touch with Pakistan for cooperation against drug-traffickers who operate in the border areas.

## UN for provision of loan to Afghan opium growers

Fp 990322

WASHINGTON (NNI) - A new UN report says that opium production is a vital source of income for the poor people of Afghanistan therefore it has further intensified the campaign against drugs in war-ravaged country. The chief of UN Drugs Control Programme, David Minsick said the basic needs of the Afghans should be kept in mind while carrying out campaign against narcotics production in Afghanistan. He said the only way of controlling drug problem in Afghanistan was to provide loans to the people.

## UN appeal for aid to Afghanistan gets no response

Fp 990328

ISLAMABAD (APP) - The United Nations says that international community has not responded positively to its appeal for humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

A UN official said they need dollars 115 million for medicines and food commodities to Afghanistan this year but they have so far received just dollars 14 million aid. Voice of America (VOA) reported.

The UN Aid Coordinator for Afghanistan, Erik De Muel, said, hopes that the return of UN foreign relief workers would help increase aid and assistance to Afghanistan.

He said they have been making efforts to lessen the agonies and miseries of the poor Afghans adding, the United Nations is trying to provide aid to the most needy and deserving Afghans. Ten UN relief officials have now returned to Afghanistan.

United Nations had pulled out all of its foreign and local workers when its officials were killed in Afghanistan some seven to eight months ago.

UN said one of the reasons for not providing aid to Afghanistan is that foreign countries have now got tired of assisting Afghanistan.

# Taliban induct Shias in commission on Bamiyan

News 990321

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The ruling Taliban have inducted several Shia representatives in a newly-formed commission set up to tackle issues and problems concerning the Shia-populated Bamiyan province in central Afghanistan.

Shia Hazaras who reached Peshawar from Bamiyan told the Sahaar News Agency Saturday that Shias loyal to Ustad Akbari, the Hezb-i-Wahdat leader, who recently defected to the Taliban, had been inducted into the commission. The Taliban have also included some Sunni Hazaras hailing from the Saighan and Kehumard districts of Bamiyan in the said commission.

The Peshawar-based Sahaar News Agency, quoting the same sources, reported that leaders of the mainstream Hezb-i-Wahdat, including Haji Mohammad Mohaqqiq

and Gen Hussain Anwari, had for the first time returned to Bamiyan after its fall to the Taliban last year. They reached Yakawlong in Bamiyan and held meetings with local Shia elders.

Mohaqqiq, who is a leader of Karim Khalili's faction of Hezb-i-Wahdat, and Anwari, who was the military commander of another Shia group Shaikh Asef Mohseni's Harkat-i-Islami, were also reported to have formed an alliance to fight the Taliban.

However, these sources told Sahaar that local Shia villagers told Mohaqqiq and Anwari that they had no complaints against the Taliban and were not keen on starting another round of fighting in Yakawlong.

In fact, reminded Mohaqqiq and Anwari, the Taliban had not only restored peace but also facilitated the return of their land and orchards

occupied by others.

In another development, the private Sahaar News Agency reported that the Taliban had appointed a Shia elder, Syed Asad, in Mazar-i-Sharif as head of a commission assigned the task of solving problems faced by the Shia Hazara population of the city. It said the commission enjoyed wide powers.

According to Sahaar, another Shia leader Ustad Khudaidad Irfani, a former aide to Karim Khalili, had reached Kabul for the first time since defecting to the Taliban. It said Irfani had met Taliban leaders and offered to raise a force of 2,000 Shia Hazara fighters to fight on the side of the Taliban.

The Sunni Taliban have been criticised in the past for persecuting the Shia Hazaras but it seems they are now determined to win the minds and hearts of the Shia Afghans.

## Data on Afghans being collected to combat terrorism

News 990327

By Hammad Ghaznavi

LAHORE: Amidst growing concern about the prime minister's security, the Intelligence Bureau and Special Branch are collecting details of the Afghans who have obtained Pakistani nationality in the last two decades.

With incidents of terrorism multiplying in Punjab, the province is the focus of the exercise. There are about 100,000 Afghans with Pakistani ID cards, settled in Lahore alone, according to a Punjab Special Branch initial report to the Chief Minister's Secretariat last week.

The exercise being conducted by the intelligence agencies is not the first of its kind. "We already have lots of data on Afghans having illegally obtained Pakistani nationality. And I tell you, we are not just updating. This is a far more comprehensive ex-

ercise which is not meant to be pigeonholed. This time the noose will reach the necks," claims a senior police officer, serving in the IB.

NBI has learnt that a similar exercise in fact about all the aliens who have obtained Pakistani nationality is on, particularly Indians. But those hunts are not primarily terrorism-related.

The Afghans case is different. They are considered involved in a host of terrorism related activity, from weapons trade to giving refuge to proclaimed offenders, from training sectarian militants to direct acts of terrorism.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had to change his schedules, routes and travel plans quite often in the recent weeks. From the January 3, Raiwind bomb blast to last week's Islamabad incident when security agencies re-

fused to give clearance, a number of security problems regarding the prime minister have been reported. In a recent press statement PML MNA Sheikh Rashid has revealed that the PM has 'survived many murder attempts in the last few months'. Little wonder the federal government has imported two bulletproof cars for the prime minister.

"Almost all the security threats to the PM came during his itinerary in Punjab. And this cannot be separated from the general rise in terrorism in the province. On the other hand, Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif is convinced that the only major threat to his exemplary rule in the province comes from the terrorism monster. So he has focused on that now. And you will see the results shortly," claimed a senior IB officer on anonymity.

## Turkmenistan offers a new channel for Afghan drugs

Fr 9903 0C

By JEHANGIR KHATTAK

PESHAWAR - Turkmenistan, over the past two or three years, has become the main route in Central Asia for the export of contraband opiates and hashish processed in Afghanistan. Some of which have first traveled through Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The oil-rich Central Asian state, which has maintained cordial relations with the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan since 1994, has also become a major channel for importing precursor chemicals for Afghan chemists. About 38 metric tons of hashish, 1.5 tons of opium and, most importantly, two tons of heroin were seized in Turkmenistan during 1997 alone.

According to a latest report of Observatoire Geopolitique Des Drogues (OGD), a Paris-based geopolitical drug watch group conducting research on social and geo-political impact of drug trafficking around the world, on September 18, 1997, a first shipment of 502 kilograms of heroin was found hidden in a container of rice at the Kushka border post.

The consignment had been sent by a firm based in Kandahar, southwestern Afghanistan, to another in Baku, Azerbaijan. A record seizure of 1,221 tons of the drug was made at the same place, on a truck taking fruit to Gaziantep, Turkey. On November 1, 1997, three tons of hashish, bound for Moscow, were seized.

Between January and July 1998, the OGD report says, Turkmen authorities confiscated a total of 13 tons of hashish and marijuana, 837 kg of opium, 90 kg of heroin and 1 kg of cocaine (which came from the Caucasus, although it is not known where it was processed). Also during the first seven months of 1998, 31 tons of acetic anhydride bound for Afghanistan were seized. These shipments were sent mainly from Iran, although some came from India and South Korea.

While the amount of drug trafficking has increased, these routes are not new to the business. The

report says that at the end of 1980s, Turkmen communist militia of Afghan nationality, who had set up a camp at Bala Murghab (a town in Afghanistan's Badkhis province bordering Turkmenistan), took advantage of their ethnic and political bonds with members of the Turkmen border security forces to send shipments of opium across the border for mujahideen they were supposed to be fighting, after collecting a tax.

Various factors have strengthened Turkmenistan's role as a trading corridor between the opium-producing regions and the Caucasian heroin routes, the report says, and points out one being the country's worsening economic situation caused by the collapse of

natural gas, and to a lesser extent cotton, production. Another, it says, is the reluctance of Turkmenistan, which does not belong to the Central Asia Economic Community (CAEC), to cooperate with its neighbours.

Much more important, however, is the "benevolent neutrality" of the authorities in Ashgabat, the Turkmen capital, towards Afghanistan's Taliban puritanical militia, which has controlled the border area between the two countries since late 1994.

One of the reasons for this attitude, the report says, is connected, historically, with the plan to build a pipeline by the CentGas consortium, led by the American company Unocal.

The report claims that in fact the Taliban movement was established by Pakistan in 1994, with the support of the United States (and probably financing from Unocal) to make the road to Turkmenistan — which was under threat from various rival groups — more secure.

It says that even though the plan to take the gas pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan is currently on hold, an alternative exists in case the negotiations aimed at taking Turkmen oil to Turkey via Iran do not succeed.

It points out that early in 1998, the Taliban were still saying that they were ready to sign an agreement with CentGas. "If the traffickers are increasingly counting on the Turkmen route, it is because drugs from Afghanistan's southeastern provinces, such as Helmand, Kandahar and Oruzgan, bound for Turkey via Iran, are the subject of violent campaigns of repression by the Iranian police army, whereas the Turkmen route is much less strictly controlled. It is especially easy to use the Kushka border post, and enormous quantities of goods of diverse origins pass through it on their way to a wide variety of destinations," the OGD report says, adding that the drugs then go to the Turkmen and Kazakh ports on the Caspian Sea. Direct routes connect

Ashgabat with Tehran, Istanbul, Karachi, Dushanbe, Tashkent and Moscow.

As for money-laundering, the OGD says: "It receives no attention from the Turkmen government, although a large number of luxury hotels — always practically empty — have been built in Ashgabat. Other big building projects, such as a presidential palace and a huge mosque, have been entrusted to Turkish companies whose sources of funding remain obscure and which are known for working at a loss.

It notes that Pakistani "businessmen", whose resources are not much more transparent, are also on the scene. "The city's role as a hub for trafficking in drugs and precursor chemicals seems likely to develop further because the dictatorial

regime of President Saparmurad Niyazov is very reluctant to cooperate with international bodies that might demand greater respect for human rights, in particular an end to torture and confinement to psychiatric hospitals, in exchange for aid," the report says.

The French organisation believes that most UNDCP projects are aimed above all at cooperation between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which makes Turkmenistan the weak link in the chain of protection set up around Afghanistan. Turkmenistan becomes more isolated and safe corridor for drugs exports to world markets because of the fact that it does not belong to any of the regional bodies, such as the customs union that links some CIS member countries.

Fr 9903 13

## Taliban publicly lash adulterer

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban militia on Friday publicly lashed a man accused of committing adultery with an unmarried woman, eyewitnesses said. Sayed Sarwar, who was found guilty of sexual intercourse with Farzana last year, was given one hundred lashes in the football ground of a school after the noon Muslim prayers. The flogging was watched by a crowd of 2,000 Kabul citizens as well as Taliban officials. Sarwar, 20, was arrested five months ago along with the girl. A court official said the accused girl, who is now pregnant, would be given the same punishment after the delivery of her baby expected in a few weeks.



# UNOCHA receives \$5m for mine programme

News 990422

Bureau Report

## Fertilizer plant blasted in Mazar-i-Sharif

By AEMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - Powerful explosions rocked the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif and severely damaged a fertilizer plant four days back, delayed reports reaching this side of the Durand Line said on Wednesday.

The reports said the explosions left many Taliban seriously wounded.

The student militia claimed that the explosions occurred due to a technical fault in the plant. However, some independent reports suggested that it was an act of sabotage, aimed at targeting the important industrial installation.

According to Peshawar-based Sahaar News Agency, the heavy explosives went off in a series of explosions, destroying the fertilizer plant, known as a "Kod-i-Burq Fabrika" situated in the Mazar city.

The plant was established with

the technical and financial support of former Soviet Union about 33 years ago.

Presently the plant was in a working condition, employing about 3,000 workers.

Being the largest industrial unit in the north, the Mazar fertilizer plant contributed significantly to the shattered economy of Afghanistan where the industrial sector virtually does not exist.

Mazar-i-Sharif, formerly the bastion of opposition forces in northern Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban student militia after fierce fighting in August last year.

The anti-Taliban opposition still claims of controlling some pockets in this strategically located northern city, dominated by non-Pashtoon ethnic groups.

Of late, the anti-Taliban opposition has been resorting to new tactics to mount its pressure on the Taliban who control 90 per cent of the country's territory.

PESHAWAR: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) has received a total of \$5.1 million from US, Canada, UK and Germany for its Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA).

A press release issued here said that UNOCHA recently received two contributions of US \$980,000 and US \$659,659 from the UK and Canada for its Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA). Additionally, it has received \$2 million from the US and \$1.5 million from Germany, it said.

The UK has provided over \$13 million since 1990 while Canada more than \$4.5 million to the programme since 1993. The US government has contributed US \$18 million while the German government has contributed over US \$9 million to MAPA since its establishment.

UNOCHA has been carrying out mine action activities in Afghanistan since 1989 and will continue its survey, clearance, awareness and training operations in Afghanistan in 1999 through non-governmental organisations, it said.

The MAPA capacity has increased from 3,900 personnel in 1998 to 4,700 in 1999 and was able to identify over 700 sq km of mine contaminated areas. By the end of March 1999 some 345 sq km of mine and UXO contaminated area have been cleared.

It has a budget of US \$25.6 million out of which only US \$9 million (35 percent of the total requirement) has been received so far.

## UN staff returning to Afghan cities

ISLAMABAD: United Nations have begun the phased return of its international staff to war-ravaged Afghanistan with the placement of five of its foreign employees each in Kabul and Kandahar.

Erick de Mul, UN Coordinator for Afghanistan told a press briefing here on Friday, the World Body plans to send back its international staff to Herat, Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif.

He said it decided to return its foreign staff, pulled out in August, following Taliban authorities took "adequate security measures."

He said the Taliban administration has appointed security liaison officers who will alert the UN staff, "if something happens so that we take action on time."

United Nations had withdrawn its foreign staff from Afghanistan following killing of two of its employees in August apparently in retaliation of US cruise missile attacks in Khost region.

The world body started re-assessment of the Afghan situation for the possible return of its international staff in February.

The UN official confirmed the re-

ports that the United States and Britain have prevented their nationals employed with the UN from returning to Afghanistan for "security reasons."

However, he expressed the hope that "it will be a temporary thing."

In response, to a question, he said the US and UK decision did not greatly affect the return of UN staff to Afghanistan as, "we are sending back relatively small numbers of international staff there."

Replying to a question on the progress of investigation into the killings of UN staff members, Erick de Mul said Taliban authorities, "indeed have made serious efforts to investigate these incidents." However, he said the final findings are yet to be made.

When asked about the UN plans to send a fact finding mission to the northern Afghanistan to look into the allegations of massive killings of people by the warring Afghan groups, he admitted, "it is getting late."

He said the UN is, "putting a little pressure," on the concerned parties to facilitate the proposed mission to visit and probe the reported incidents.—APP

# Taliban militia signs trade accords with Kazakhstan

FB 990401

By AIMAL KHAN

**PESHAWAR** - The Taliban authorities have inked some important trade agreements with Kazakhstan.

Of late relations between Kazakhstan and the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan have seen significant improvement.

During his recent two-day visit to Islamabad, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokaev also held meetings with the Taliban representatives in early March this year.

Like Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan too has maintained a neutral posture vis-a-vis the student militia's rule in Afghanistan, while the rest of Central Asian Republics have a visible soft corner for anti-Taliban opposition.

According to informed Afghan sources, a delegation of the student militia headed by Maulvi Fazal Mohammad Faizan, visited Kazakhstan few days back.

Maulvi Faizan, whose official position is equal to Secretary in Taliban's ministry of Commerce, held meetings with Kazakh officials and representatives of industrial and commercial organisations. Taliban delegation also signed trade agreements with Kazakhstan, added the sources. The details of the agreements are, however, still awaited.

Meanwhile, Taliban authorities have reportedly sought the help of Turkmen government for the repair and reconstruction of fertilizer plant in Mazar-i-Sharif, a key northern Afghan city.

The plant was severely damaged in an act of sabotage, when a powerful device exploded in the plant few days back.

Kazakh firms, sources said, had also offered to sell wheat to Afghanistan some time back. The import of wheat from Kazakhstan to Afghanistan, in this context, also figured at the talks of Maulvi Faizan, added the sources.

Sources said that the issue of wheat sale to Afghanistan and Pakistan also came under discussion during talks. Kazakhstan government has kept complete silence on the visit of Taliban delegation to the Central Asian State. An official of Kazakh Foreign Ministry official just said neither he confirmed nor denied the report. Taliban sources however confirmed the reports.

## Drugs eradication: UN not satisfied with Taliban

Natoun 990402

From Shanim Shahid

**PESHAWAR** - As a result of 20-year war and regular fighting, the Afghanistan has become a safe heaven for Heroin manufacturers drug-traffickers from all over the world. Afghanistan has attracted the drug barons, who after converting the opium into deadly drug-heroin, shift it to the various parts of the world.

It is yet to be confirmed, whether, the Taliban leaders and commanders are involved in the drug trafficking and manufacturing or not, but, due to their bad policies, they have been criticised by the entire world. Before Taliban, almost all the jehadic commanders as well as the militiamen from Northern provinces had contributed in the promotion of drug trafficking and production in Afghanistan.

Recently, Taliban have destroyed some 34 heroin manufacturing laboratories in the eastern province of Nangarhar but some authenticated reports disclose that so far 116 heroin manufacturing laboratories exist in various places on the Afghanistan borders with Pakistan. While demolishing the heroin manufacturing laboratories in Achin district of Nangarhar province Abdul Hamid Akhonzada, chief of Afghanistan's anti-drugs department had claimed that they are going to demolish the heroin manufacturing laboratories in Helmand and Qandahar areas of Afghanistan. Qandahar is the headquarter of the Taliban movement from where they govern the war-ravaged Afghanistan. According to a report released by the United Nations Drugs Control Programme, Laboratories are still operating

along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Balochistan ( Nimruz, Helmand and Kandahar provinces). Although the direct involvement of the Taliban cannot be confirmed however, the Press reports and reports of international agency do create an impression that Taliban, due to financial crisis are using drugs for revenue purposes.

A recent report discloses, "Opiates have played a crucial part in the politics of Southwest Asia for about 20 years as a weapon in the hands of secret services and a barometer for the relations between states in the region and between the world powers especially the United States. Iran though cannot be excluded that some officials took advantage of the drug trade, is making serious efforts to stop the transit of Afghan drug production on its territory. Notwithstanding Iran was decertified by the United States for reasons that have little to do with the necessities of the anti-drug fight.

Likewise, estimating the quantity being produced in Afghanistan was a significant diplomatic instrument for the countries. Large drug production in Afghanistan is at the root of many trafficking activities not only in countries bordering Afghanistan to the east ( Pakistan ) and to the south and south-east ( Iran ) but also in all the countries of Central Asia."

The Iranian authorities have indicated that the seizures made in 1995 in Khorasan province on the border with Afghanistan have been significant. This is supported by the observations of a member of the International Red Cross working in Kandahar, who says the Taliban have closed down the principal

points of racketeering located on the Kandahar highway towards Iran. This of course would facilitate the movement of traffickers. A volunteer who was riding with a convoy of medicine from Herat to Kabul saw an opium-filled truck barely covered with canvas making its way towards Iran. Witnesses have spoken of convoys of drugs (opium, morphine and hashish) being transported to Pakistan under Taliban protection. Cases of trafficking using Boeing 727s belonging to the Afghan airline Ariana between Kandahar and the Gulf states especially Dubai have been reported."

Transporters travelling via the former royal city of Afghanistan have to stop there to pay transport taxes and undergo a rapid check. The men who work in the offices have had beards and turbans for two years. Next door, a small room is kept under lock and key: inside, five tones of opium have spent two years waiting for the occasional journalists curious enough to pay them a visit. The five tones in 50-kg sacks ooze a blackish paste. In corner of the room there are a few dozen kilos of coarsely officers say, but barely 500 kg are visible. That Taliban seized movement of the drugs in the first few months in power during 1994 to 1995 but the things could not improve further."

The reports further state that the Pakistanis and Iranians have seized sufficient quantities of opium, morphine and heroin. In Badakhshan province, home to former President Prof. Rabbani and where many military commanders take their orders from Ahmad Shah Masud poppy production rose from 22 tones to 65 tonnes between 1994 and 1996.

# Taliban deny expulsion of people from Bamiyan

News 990403

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Saturday dismissed as baseless the opposition alliance claim that the Islamic militia is forcibly driving out civilians from the central province of Bamiyan.

"The Shia population of Bamiyan are happy with Taliban because we have not imposed any restriction on them," Taliban charge d'affaires Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rahman Haqqani said. "There is no truth in the opposition claim and it is nothing but a malicious propaganda by the opposition against Taliban," Haqqani told NNI.

Opposition's spokesman Dr Abdullah Friday accused Taliban of compelling a big number of Bamiyan's population to quit their homes in recent days and threatened to arrest those who stay behind.

"The people in Bamiyan were in fact unhappy with the Shiite Hizb-e Wahdat's militia and are leading happy after the area was captured by the forces of Islamic Emirate," Taliban envoy said.

Taliban captured Bamiyan in September last from the Hezbi-Wahdat faction.

Haqqani said a team of the Red Cross in its recent report had stated that there was calm in Bamiyan and the people of the area are living in peaceful atmosphere. "If the opposition does not trust, they should trust the Red Cross," he insisted.

The opposition spokesman had claimed that Taliban arrested around 500 elderly residents of Bamiyan and said such actions were a warning to civilians to leave their villages.

He said the Taliban's aim was to avoid any civilian uprising in support of opposition troops.—NNI

Nation 990410  
Darwaz outbreak  
kills 200

By Uzma T. Haroon

ISLAMABAD - Some 200 deaths have been confirmed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) since February 1999 in the villages of Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. The cause of the deaths is influenza type-A. The disease, known as Darwaz outbreak, an area with a popula-

## Darwaz outbreak kills 200

From page 1

tion of 77,000, spread like an epidemic middle of February. It has been diagnosed by health specialists as influenza with complications. It caused so many deaths in a short period of time because of lack of medical facilities and inaccessibility of the remote villages that border Tajikistan.

The WHO Representative on Afghanistan, Dr. Mohamed A. Jama, briefing the media in Islamabad assured that the situation is now under control and medical relief has been provided by WHO in collaboration with NGOs.

"It is not an easy place to get information from. It takes about two days of walking to get to a village from where they can send radio message," explained Dr. Jama. The affected villages are located at the tip of northern Afghanistan which is an isolated and unserved area. The first news of this disease was received on February 13 through a radio call from the local commander to the governor who then informed the WHO. It was discovered that two travellers arrived in Jamarache-Bala suffering from flu-like symptoms including fever, cough and muscular pain. They stayed at the house of a local leader and later one of them carried on with his journey to his own village, Kamar. The children of the local leader and other household members caught the disease. An air borne disease, influenza, was also reported from other villages that spread quickly.

During winter, many people crowd in one room and the hygienic conditions are poor. The disease spreads from human to human and soon many people, especially children, fell victim to it. The

deadly influenza, in a short period of time, affected all households of the village. In Jamarache-Bala, 31 male and 30 female deaths were reported over the next six weeks. Of these, 29 were children under the age of five years. Because the basic health centre is six days away by foot from this village in summer and vaccine coverage is 0 per cent, the strong influenza caught on like an epidemic before health relief could be made available.

On receiving information, the WHO health teams were sent by helicopter because that was the only means of reaching the place quickly. Even preparing for that took two weeks because of bad weather conditions. Upon reaching Jamarache-Bala with medical supplies on February 26, the health experts collected throat swab samples that were then sent to the National Institute of Health in Islamabad, and also to Switzerland and the UK. Investigations confirmed the presence of influenza type A which if not treated with the right medication can be a killer like two other forms of influenza, B and C.

"The epidemic has subsided. There are no more deaths. We have collected the data for investigation on people who have died. Medical supplies are being provided and a contact has been established through radio. The staff is being trained for follow-up and surveillance," informed Dr. Jama. WHO has sub-offices in Afghanistan that are strategically located at nine sites for providing support in response to the outbreak. The WHO medical experts warn that lack of essential health care can turn influenza into a deadly disease.

## 'Mulla Omar's status in any govt non-negotiable'

News 990402  
Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Taliban have made it clear that the status of their leader Mulla Mohammad Omar in any Afghan government set-up was non-negotiable and he would have to be accepted as Afghanistan's supreme leader in any peace settlement.

In an interview with the Peshawar-based Sahara News Agency, the Taliban spokesman Mulla Abdul Hye Mutmain said the opposition must understand that the Taliban Islamic Movement founder Mulla Mohammad Omar was their Amirul Momtineen and would remain so in any government set-up in Afghanistan. "We don't want to talk about his replacement. No amount of pressure can make us change our stance on this issue," he stressed.

When asked about the status of next round of talks between the Taliban and their opponents in light of the Ashgabat accord, Mutmain said the opposition is mistaken if it thinks it can pressure the Taliban by preparing for war to accept its

conditions for a settlement. "If the opposition is preparing for war in eastern Afghanistan or elsewhere, it is up to their choice and it doesn't bother us," he remarked.

Mutmain dismissed reports in Pakistan's vernacular press about arrest of seven spies sent to Afghanistan to track down Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, and termed them baseless. He said no UN worker or six French aid workers have been arrested in Herat or anywhere else in Afghanistan and no such enquiry was in progress. "It is an attempt by certain elements to create differences between the UN and the Taliban."

The UN staff are returning to Afghanistan and presently a WFP office is in Kabul," he said. When asked as to why American and British workers of UN weren't returning to Afghanistan, the Taliban leader said the Afghan government was ready to receive all UN workers and would provide security to the Americans and Britons who want to work in Afghanistan.

# Rockets hit Kabul as Taliban rule out talks with Opposition

Natson 990412

KABUL (AFP) - Three rockets struck Kabul overnight as Taliban chief Mulla Mohammad Omar ruled out further peace talks between Afghanistan's warring parties, officials and residence said Sunday.

Residents said the rockets struck late on Saturday and appeared to be fired from positions held by forces led by northern alliance commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, and an alliance spokesman told AFP he was not aware of any strikes launched on Kabul by the opposition.

The attack came shortly after Taliban supreme leader Omar said the next round of talks were not possible because of a refusal by the opposition northern alliance to accept a single militia leadership.

He said the United Nations special envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, had been told of the decision during a recent trip to Kandahar, the Taliban's

de facto southern capital.

Prospects for peace in Afghanistan were raised in the Turkmen capital Ashgabad a month ago with a breakthrough agreement in UN sponsored talks on power sharing and the role of the judiciary in a future Afghan government.

However, the leadership issue was expected to provide a stumbling block to peace between the Taliban and their rivals, with alliance leaders refusing to accept Omar as the single leader of Afghanistan.

'In the Ashgabad talks we also raised the issue of Emirate,' Omar said in an official Radio Shariat broadcast.

'Now that the opposition is not willing to accept the Emirate, this clearly shows that numerous commands will come into being in place of one single command.'

'Therefore the next round of talks is not possible,' Omar said.

He said the decision was made by the ruling council of Ulema who had con-

vened a special meeting on the peace process.

Omar added that it was not possible to share government with those who have 'destroyed the country or have looted the state's treasury'. The rocket strikes and the breakdown in peace talks came amid mounting speculation in the Afghan capital that both sides were gearing-up for an offensive.

Most of the recent fighting has been centred in central Bamiyan province after uprisings were staged by ethnic Hazaras who form the basis for the Hezb-i-Wahadat political faction of the alliance.

Opposition and independent sources said this had enabled Masood to advance to within a few kilometres of the provincial capital, Bamiyan City.

The Taliban's grip on Afghanistan covers about 80 per cent of the country and follows six years of civil war with the mujahideen factions who took power after the Soviet-backed communist regime crumbled in 1992.

## Taliban, opposition forces fighting in Samangan province

News 990414

KABUL: Fighting blocked a strategic crossroad in northern Afghanistan Tuesday as opposition soldiers struggled to gain territory from their Taliban enemies, who rule much of the country, an opposition spokesman said.

Also Tuesday, the Taliban dismissed UN criticism of their decision to put an end to UN-brokered peace talks with the northern-based opposition. Abdul Hai Muttmain, a Taliban spokesman, called the UN talks a ploy to unseat Mullah Mohammed Omar as head of Afghanistan.

'In our country we need one leader. The UN should not be disappointed but should realise that in 90% of Afghanistan we are in control

and we have brought peace,' he said in a satellite telephone interview from his headquarters in southern Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, several hundred kilometers northwest of Kabul in Samangan province the Taliban and the opposition waged a fierce battle at Dary Suf, a strategic crossroad that leads to the troubled central province of Bamiyan. According to an opposition spokesman, who belonged to the Shiite Muslim Group Hezb-e-Wahadat, but did not want to give his name, the fighting had resulted in scores of casualties.

The Shiite Muslim Party is trying to open the road to the central province of Bamiyan, which is largely

dominated by Shiite Muslims also known as Hazaras.

There have been unconfirmed reports of heavy fighting also in Bamiyan where the Taliban are in control of most of the area. However, there are pockets of resistance from Hezb-e-Wahadat soldiers in the area.

Muttmain said the opposition launched an offensive in Dary Suf but were pushed back.

Claims by both sides in this protracted and bloody conflict are difficult to confirm. Both sides often make exaggerated claims.

Meanwhile on Monday, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he was unhappy with the Taliban decision to suspend peace talks. —AP

### Taliban order civil servants to wear turbans

News 990412

KABUL: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Islamic movement has ordered all civil servants to wear turbans while at work or be sacked, official sources said here Sunday.

They said an order from Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar demanding the compulsory wearing of turbans instead of traditional local hats had been circulated in government ministries in Kabul in the past few days.

An order to wear turbans has been in effect in the military establishment for a long time, but the sources said it would now be enforced for civil servants, who usually wear traditional woollen or 'karakul' lambskin hats. —Reuters

# 30 killed as fighting rages in Afghanistan

Fp 990419

KABUL (AP) — The Taliban army and their opponents waged fierce battles on several fronts in northern Afghanistan Sunday.

Both sides in the bitter and protracted conflict were reporting gains. Because of the remoteness of the region it was impossible to verify.

According to opposition spokesman, who identifies himself only as Abdullah, fighting has been heavy in northern Faryab province, where they are claiming to have made gains.

Abdullah said a key supply route of the Taliban's had been cut to Faryab province, most of which is under the control of the Taliban religious army.

Also heavy fighting was reported at Khinjan in Baghlan province, some 150 kilometers north of Kabul. There the Taliban claimed to have pushed the opposition out of the region and deeper into the Panjshir Valley, the stronghold of opposition leader Ahmed Shah Masoud.

Both the Taliban and the opposition accused each other of firing the first bullet.

The United Nations, which has been trying unsuccessfully to broker a peace agreement, has urged restraint from both sides.

However with the onset of warm spring weather it seems that both sides have embarked on a new season of fighting.

Earlier, the United Nations had hoped to convene another round of peace talks this month, possibly in Afghanistan.

Both sides blame the other for scuttling the peace process.

NNI adds: According to Radio Tehran, at least 30 people from both the warring Afghan sides had been killed in renewed fighting in Baghlan province.

Taliban have launched a major offensive against their rivals in north of Baghlan province. A spokesman for the Taliban has said they had succeeded in recapturing the defence line of the opposition and seized a number of areas in the province. Sources said fighting was still going on in Khinjan area along the Salang Highway.

## Afghan opposition securing areas around Bamiyan

Natson 990423

KABUL (AFP) - The Shiite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the Afghan opposition alliance said Thursday its forces were securing areas around Bamiyan after wresting control of the city from the ruling Taliban militia.

'The Taliban have not launched any counter attacks. The situation in town is quiet and our soldiers are collecting military equipment the Taliban have left behind,' Hezb-i-Wahdat spokesman Mohammad Muhaqqeq told AFP by satellite telephone from Bamiyan.

Bamiyan, in central Afghanistan, fell to the Iranian-backed Hezb-i-Wahdat early Wednesday after a lightning offensive was launched with the support of its opposition allies.

Muhaqqeq said about 100 Taliban troops were killed and a further 100 were taken prisoner, and that the alliance suffered 10 deaths and a further six wounded.

'First, we want to secure other areas of Hazarajat from the Taliban who treat the Hazara like slaves. After that our programme will depend on the overall strategy of our allies,' he said.

Thousands of Shiite Muslim Hazaras were massacred by the Sunni Muslim Taliban when Taliban forces seized the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif last year, according to the United Nations.

Bamiyan is the heart-land of Hazarajat and the ethnic Hazaras who along with Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens form the ethnic composition of the northern-based alliance which has opposed Taliban rule.

The Taliban held Bamiyan for more than seven months.

A Taliban spokesman was unavailable for comment and reports from Bamiyan have been ignored by the official media, although sources in Pakistan said the militia could be preparing for a counter offensive.

The fall of Bamiyan and strategic supply routes which link Taliban-held

Kabul with strongholds in the north, like Mazar-i-Sharif, was expected to boost opposition controlled territory to about 25 percent of the country.

Alliance spokesman, Abdullah said front lines had pushed northwards from Bamiyan to Dare Shikari and in the east to Shebar, and that this had expanded the opposition's capacity to ferry arms and supplies.

'The fall of Bamiyan is very significant. It will create more problems for the Taliban in the mountainous areas of the north,' he said.

Analysts said gains by the Hezb-i-Wahdat signalled the Shiite Hazaras were not the spent force many believed after the Taliban scored a series of stunning victories across northern Afghanistan last year.

'Control of Bamiyan and the local airport might also result in Tehran resuming its flights of weapons into the area,' one western analyst said.

Iran and Russia have both been accused of providing military support to the opposition, a charge which both countries deny. Pakistan has also rejected similar allegations that it lends military support to the Taliban.

However, all countries along with the United States, United Nations and Afghanistan's remaining neighbours have taken an active role in urging the militia and the alliance to resolve their differences peacefully.

UN-sponsored peace talks broke down 10 days ago amid rising expectations that each side was preparing for a major offensive to take advantage of improving weather conditions.

In Bamiyan, Muhaqqeq said peace talks remained an option after six years of civil war with the militia.

'If the Taliban are ready for peace, well and good. Otherwise we will take our own appropriate measures,' he said.



# Loss of Bamiyan

News 990430

## Rahimullah Yusufzai

**A**s feared, the ruling Taliban Islamic Movement and the opposition Northern Alliance have returned to the battlefield and started fighting for the same territory that has changed hands a number of times and claimed innumerable lives in the past. When the two sides failed to resume their UN-sponsored peace talks in Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat, as decided in the earlier two rounds of negotiations, there were predictions galore that they would start attacking each other as soon as the snow thawed and the traditional summer fighting season began. This is precisely what has happened with the anti-Taliban alliance firing the first salvo and taking the Taliban by surprise in Shia-populated Bamiyan town in central Afghanistan. The loss of Bamiyan by the Taliban would only accelerate the fighting as they would now try to avenge the defeat. On the other hand, the Northern Alliance after gaining its first major military victory in almost a year would be emboldened to go for the kill, particularly in Northern Afghanistan where the Taliban are deemed to be vulnerable.

The... Taliban... had... captured Bamiyan town on September 13 last year, meeting insignificant resistance from the factionalised Shia armed groups. Subsequently, they took the garrison town of Yakawlong and occupied some of the main routes. The formidable Shibar Pass was already in their possession, enabling them not only to retain control of the Ghorband valley which opens into the fertile Shomali plains near Charikar but also keep an eye on the goings-on in the areas and routes that link Taliban-held provinces in northern, southern and eastern Afghanistan. However, it appears that the fighters belonging to Karim Khalili's Hezb-i-Wahdat, Shaikh Asef Mohseni's Harkat-i-Islami and other smaller Shiite factions never abandoned the mountainous Bamiyan province completely and instead waited for their chance to strike back during the seven months of Taliban occupation of the area. Bamiyan has thus become the third place after former defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood's strongholds of Shomali plains, including Charikar, Jabal-us-

Siraj and Bagram, and Takhar province that have been wrested back from Taliban in recent months and years. It explains the tenacity of the fighting force loyal to Masood and the Shiite groups and the inherent opposition to Taliban rule in these places. It also underscores the fact that these groups are well-stocked in terms of arms and ammunition, supplied mostly by Iran, Russia and some of the Central Asia republics still ruled by former communists.

The fact that the Taliban were able to hold most of Bamiyan for seven months only also raises doubts about their ability to retain control of their remaining possessions in North-

landscape.

It seems the Taliban are under tremendous pressure to try and re-take Bamiyan's provincial capital, also known as Bamiyan, and revive their land route linking Kabul with Mazar-i-Sharif in Northern Afghanistan via Maidan-Shahr and Bamiyan. Already, the Salang Highway, which offers the quickest and safest route between Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, is in Masood's possession. For quite sometime, the Taliban were forced to supply their troops in Kunduz, bordering Tajikistan, by air. When they captured Faryab, Jauzjan, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan and Bamiyan provinces last year, they were able to open two

which they found out to their cost that retaining control of Bagram, Charikar and Jabal-us-Siraj was an uphill task in the face of lethal guerilla strikes by Masood's men backed by the local Tajik population. The Taliban have not attempted to recapture Bagram, Charikar and Jabal-us-Siraj again as they are aware of the risks and costs involved. An analysis of the cost-effectiveness of again capturing and holding Bamiyan may yield a similar conclusion and, therefore, cause delay in executing any such plan. But it is also possible that the urge to exact revenge for the reverses suffered by the Taliban in Bamiyan may force their hand to attempt another assault on the Shia-held province. That would trigger yet another round of blood-letting and spread the fighting to the other frontlines in Northern Afghanistan and also north of Kabul, where Masood's men wait for an opportune time to attempt a march on the Afghan capital.

The renewed fighting would also heighten tension in the region. The not-so-covert Iranian interference in Afghanistan could again bring Tehran and Kabul to the brink of an armed confrontation. It would also put tremendous pressure on Tehran's ties with Islamabad and contribute to the doubts that already exist in the two capitals about each other's designs in Afghanistan. Pakistan again would be required to practice a balancing act, trying to reassure Iran and at the same time keep the Taliban happy. There are many people who believe Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's recent visit to Russia, together with his efforts to appease the US, has already led Islamabad to distance itself a bit from the Taliban and deprived them of the crucial support of the only country friendly with Afghanistan. The US too would be tempted to assist in the downfall of the Taliban as that would enable it to track down its Public Enemy Number 1, ie Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, and reaffirm its superpower status. Russia and the Central Asian republics neighbouring Afghanistan would also be relieved to see the Taliban vanquished as it would minimise the risk, at least for the time-being, of Islamist resurgence threatening their neo-communist regimes. The Taliban, it would seem, are confronted with the biggest challenge to their power and existence at a time when they are almost friendless and resourceless.

## Pakistan again would be required to practice a balancing act, trying to reassure Iran and at the same time keep the Taliban happy

ern Afghanistan. In certain parts of Northern Afghanistan, the opposition Northern Alliance has been able to convince many non-Pashtoon ethnic minority communities, including Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen and Hazaras, that the largely Pashtoon Taliban were an occupation force. The Taliban inability to attract more non-Pashtoon to their ranks and their insistence on appointing Pashtoon governors and military commanders in these areas also contributed to strengthen this feeling. This writer has seen Taliban governors and other important officials unable to communicate in Persian, the dominant language in northern-western and north-eastern Afghanistan with the local people. Speaking through interpreters in one's own country, especially if the relationship is that of the ruler and subject, would obviously raise the spectre of an occupation army trying to dictate terms to an unwilling populace. Despite their best efforts to portray themselves as an Islamic movement transcending the ethnic and linguistic barriers, the Taliban have found themselves unable to gain the confidence of the non-Pashtoon sections of the Afghan people, in particular of the men under arms and the intellectuals. This has been their Achilles' heel during their four-and-a-half years existence and would remain so as long as they remain on Afghanistan's political and military

land-routes to Northern Afghanistan via Herat-Badghis-Maimana-Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul-Maidan-Shahr-Bamiyan-Mazar-i-Sharif even though the roads were terrible and some of the areas enroute unsafe. But it was an improvement compared to the past when they had no overland connection with places like Kunduz and were required to take risks and spend more to reinforce their troops and replenish supplies. Now with the loss of Bamiyan, they would be deprived of one of the important overland routes to Northern Afghanistan and put more pressure on Taliban soldiers defending cities like Mazar-i-Sharif, Shibergan, Maimana, Aibak, Pule Khunri, Khenjan, Doshi, etc.

**T**hough there were reports of Taliban massing troops in Tala, Borfaq and Maidan-Shahr at two extremes of the road that approaches Bamiyan from the north and the south, one is still unaware of any major impending assault to re-take Bamiyan town. The attack by the Shiite groups was so swift and big that the Taliban were caught unawares and it would take them a while to assemble a force capable of dislodging the Hezb-i-Wahdat, Harkat-i-Islami and other armed groups from Bamiyan town. The Taliban also know that holding Bamiyan once it is recaptured would remain a risky adventure, in the same way in

## Opp steps up anti-Taliban operation

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghan opposition Sunday reported new initiatives in several northern provinces to repel the Taliban armies since the fall of Bamiyan City to the alliance, a senior military commander said. A spokesman for the opposition Shiite Harkat-i-Islami said Mohseni told NNI from Tashkent that the alliance has intensified operation in Samangan, Sare Pol, Balkh, Faryab and Jowzjan provinces. "Our commanders from Central Afghanistan have confirmed fierce fighting in Kotal e Shebar, Kotal e Hajji Gak (next to Bessood) and Dara e Shekari," Mohseni said. He said fighting had also flared up in Faryab, following the brief capture of Juna Bazaar by troops loyal to the Northern Alliance last week. Alliance troops managed to briefly cut off Sheberghan from Maimana four days ago. Mohseni said that the much-publicised "mutiny" as described by Radio Shariat has been quelled in Faizabad, the capital of Badkhash province.

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## Afghanistan V poised to go on Internet

KABUL (AFP) - The Internet, e-mail and direct international dialling are about to come to war-torn Afghanistan — a country with only two known international land lines and a domestic phone system dating back to the 1950s.

Local officials said the first direct links would bring Afghanistan online within two to three months as part of a 15-year phased program designed to eventually reconstruct the local telecommunications sector.

The move, which has the blessing of the hardline Taliban regime, follows months of negotiations with US-based Telephone Systems International Inc. (TSI). It is expected to begin installing satellite dishes and microwave equipment by mid-May.

TSI vice president for administration, Stuart Bentham, said the equipment needed to make the initial connections would arrive in about 10 days, with the first links established shortly afterwards.

The first dishes will be installed in southern Kandahar and Kabul. This will enable TSI to introduce the standard mobile phone, common elsewhere in the world, during the next phase.

"The satellite-based system will be connected to the existing telephone system in Kabul, which was installed in 1956. This will enable residents to make international calls from their homes," Bentham said.

While direct global dialling has been standard in much of the world for decades, the concept remains a novelty in Afghanistan where most of the infrastructure has been destroyed by war.

There are only two known international lines.

One links Kabul with Peshawar in Pakistan, the second was installed by British Telecom in 1990 and linked London with Kabul. But authorities said the London link had not been used since 1992 when the civil war escalated.

Afghanistan's country code is 93 and it's not in too many phone books.

## Taliban publicly lash adulterer in Herat city

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's hardline Taliban militia publicly flogged a man accused of having illegal sex with a woman in the western Afghan province of Herat. Radio Shariat said Monday.

Mohammad Zarif was administered 100 lashes in front of a large crowd in the army compound of Herat on the Iranian border, it said. The punishment executed on Sunday was approved by the militia's Supreme Leader Mulla Mohammad Omar, the Taliban mouth-piece said.

The Taliban's deputy communications minister, Mulla Alladad Tabib, said restoration of communications was crucial for the economy.

"Global communications has a big role in economics and Afghanistan's communications has been destroyed 100 percent, hence the agreement with TSI," he told AFP.

Tabib said TSI's initial capital spending would reach 175 million dollars and this would increase to 244 million dollars as the network is rolled out.

Bentham said traffic would increase as the market expanded, with plans to eventually connect Afghanistan with the Trans-Siberia optic fibre cable through Turkmenistan.

"But it will be two to three years before this is even contemplated."

He said the system would use the same technology as deployed by the Germans to extend their telephone network into east Germany after the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989.

Billing will be through pre-purchased phone cards while special tariffs will be offered at night, when a gateway link to the Internet will be established via London.

Bentham said the network would be initially pitched at local businesses, the Taliban government and foreigners.

Currently Afghanistan's still-warring factions, foreign aid workers, the United Nations and journalists rely on hand radio and bulky and expensive satellite phones.

These international networks, such as Inmarsat, are controlled from outside the country and centralised through head offices in capital cities. Calls cost about three dollars a minute. TSI calls are expected to cost between one and two dollars a minute.

Zarif, who had been captured by the security personnel while committing the act of Zina (illegal sexual intercourse), confessed his crime before the Herat military court," the station said.

It did not say what happened to the woman.

Under the Taliban's ultra-strict interpretation of the Islamic Sharia law, married adulterers are stoned to death while bachelors are given lashes, thieves have their limbs chopped off and murderers executed publicly.

Harkat-i-Islami Afghanistan told this news agency from inside Bamiyan city.

General Anwari said on April 27 the bombings were ferocious and caused widespread damage to the said towns' limited infrastructure.

He said that following the fall of Bamiyan last week, the Taliban launched a major offensive on Dar-e Suf (Samangan). This was to limit the advance of the Alliance towards Samangan and Balkh proper. However, the Taliban were dealt a heavy blow yesterday when Alliance troops advanced on the towns of Chapchal (Samangan - on the border of Balkh province) and Keshende (Balkh).

## 50 killed in Taliban's jet bombing: Rivals

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - At least 50 people have been killed in northern and central Afghanistan as a result of Taliban jets' bombardment in the last two days, a top opposition military commander said on Thursday.

"Taliban jets bombed the towns of Jabel Saraj, Taluqan and Bamiyan killing 10, 30 and 10 respectively," General Sayed Hussain Anwari, chief Military Commander

## Ancient stone Buddha badly damaged: Afghan opposition

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's opposition soldiers, who captured the capital of central Bamiyan province, said Friday that one of two giant ancient stone Buddhas has been badly damaged.

The report could not be independently confirmed, but a spokesman for Afghanistan's opposition Hezbe-Wahadat party, which now controls Bamiyan, said that 70 percent of the smaller Buddha has been destroyed.

"The head is completely gone," said Mohammed Jawari, who was contacted by satellite telephone.

Bamiyan, some 250 kilometres west of the beleaguered capital of Kabul, is home to the world's largest standing Buddha and a second smaller one.

Bamiyan was the scene of a ferocious battle between Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia and Hezbe-Wahadat earlier this week.

It ended with Hezbe-Wahadat capturing Bamiyan, a significant victory for the opposition.

However, it's not clear whether the smaller Buddha was damaged during the fighting or whether it had been vandalised while Bamiyan was under the control of the Taliban.

After capturing Bamiyan, Hezbe-Wahadat had said that the two stone statues were unharmed, however, Jawari who gave that initial information said, "I was told they were not damaged, but I saw them

and the small one is 70 percent gone... the head is completely gone."

The tallest statue, measuring 53 metres and the smaller Buddha, standing 35 metres were carved out of the Afghan mountain side in the 5th century ad.

The supreme leader of the Taliban religious army, Mullah Mohammed Omar, earlier ordered his troops to protect the two statues, although several Taliban commanders said that they should be destroyed because images are repugnant to Islam.

There were confirmed reports when the Taliban first took control of Bamiyan last year that a Taliban soldier fired a tank twice at the smaller Buddha hitting it in the face and groin.

Local residents of Bamiyan say the smaller Buddha is female and the taller one male, although there are no body parts on either statues.

Characteristic of the Taliban's rule has been its restriction on women. The Taliban force women to cover from head to toe in the all-enveloping 'burqa'. The more devout among the Taliban also paint their first floor windows black to keep prying eyes from seeing women inside the home.

There was no immediate comment from the Taliban, although several attempts were made to reach the Taliban headquarters in southern Afghanistan. —AP

# Pak-Turkmen gasline to be given impetus

Nation 990430

By Our Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan Thursday renewed their commitment to the proposed Pak-Turkmen gas pipeline through Afghanistan, considerably delayed by the withdrawal of foreign giant, UNOCAL, from the multi-billion dollar project and, signed a joint declaration to reactivate it within the next three months.

Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister Batyr Sardjaev Arazov and Oil Minister Redjepbai Arazov and Afghan Minister of Industries and Mines Alhaj Moulvi Ahmedjan held a meeting here, and decided to give an impetus to the project, which was pushed in doldrums due to UNOCAL's walkout.

"Keeping in view the national interest of Afghan people, the participants of the tripartite meeting agreed that Pak-Turkmen pipeline will have an immediate positive impact on the current situation prevailing in Afghanistan. Its implementation will not only help re-

store complete peace in the war-torn country but also give impetus to the process of its economic revival," the joint declaration said.

It said that the project will definitely have long lasting positive effects not only for the participating countries but also for the people of the entire region. The three countries reinforced their resolve to work closely to expedite the start of the project at the earliest.

They resolved to hold a tripartite ministerial meeting every three months to review progress and take requisite decisions and to constitute a joint task force at senior level to have continuous interaction amongst themselves and with CENTGAS for close monitoring of the project.

The Afghan side made a commitment and declaration for ensuring full support to CENTGAS for operations on the project inside its country. CENTGAS will expedite its efforts to implement the project and give a schedule for major milestones identified in the tripartite meeting.

Flanked by Batyr Sardjaev Arazov and Alhaj Moulvi Ahmedjan, Chaud-

hry Nisar told newsmen after the signing ceremony of the joint declaration that when "we were about to do the financial close last year, UNOCAL walked out" and an impression was created that the project has fallen through. "The present tripartite meeting was held to negate this impression."

He said that this project is a window, opening unlimited options both economically and politically for the entire region and, will not only connect South Asia with Central Asia but will open new vistas, new horizons. He said it is not just a pipeline project, but will open many avenues including seaports for most of the Central Asian Republics and increase interaction by rail and road subsequently. "The three countries felt that the project would bring peace to Afghanistan and do wonders for its economic activity and political stability."

The Minister clarified that the consortium that had undertaken the project is very much in place even after UNOCAL's withdrawal. Major international companies are still part of this consortium and committed to undertake this project at earliest. "We are hopeful that as a result of the time-table of three months, we will be able to achieve substantial progress in the next meeting to be held at Asgabat in July this year, given the commitment of the leadership of the three countries. We have decided to invite all the companies of the consortium there."

He said once this project materializes, it will have a multiplier effect in furthering cooperation in South Asia and Central Asian Republics and putting Afghanistan in a unique position of becoming a facilitator in this geo-political triangle.

Chaudhry Nisar admitted that the withdrawal of UNOCAL, which was the lead player in the consortium, not only delayed the project but created a big question mark about it. "The present tripartite meeting was meant to address this delay and identify ways and means to expedite the project."

The Minister said that the financial close was to take place by the end of the last year and, by December 1998, physical work was to start. The project has now been delayed by five months. He said that one of the reasons cited by UNOCAL for its withdrawal was the Afghan situation.

"We have looked at it and feel that if all the political and other aspects are resolved, there would be absolutely no delay to get this project off the ground. Whatever the conditions, all the countries are strongly inclined to expedite it."

He said CENTGAS would decide about the lead player in the consortium which could be from the consortium nor from the outside keeping in view its technical, professional and financial background. He said that CENTGAS has set three months to identify the lead player. "We have been briefed by it about the companies which have shown interest. Pakistan and Afghanistan have also received overtures from friendly

countries."

The Minister said the project was not a mirage because in just 16 months the three countries had achieved what could not be realized in six years and that was the price mechanism between Turkmenistan and the consortium, and between Pakistan and the consortium.

"We are working for the worst case scenario: if there is no recognition of the Taliban government; if foreign financial institutions refuse funding and if there is no political stability. We have considered even to divide the pipeline: From Daultabad to Turkmenistan border to be laid by Turkmenistan; its laying from this point to Pakistan's border to be the responsibility of Afghanistan and then Pakistan to take care of the remaining portion," he said.

"If we resort to this strategy, there will be no problem. Different countries have shown interest to fund the pipeline in Afghanistan because the entire area through which it will pass is totally safe and under Taliban's control. We absolutely have no doubt about the security situation in Afghanistan. If we can procure funds for the portion of pipeline passing through Afghanistan through non-conventional sources or from certain friendly countries, recognition of the Taliban government would not be a hurdle in the execution of the project."

Chaudhry Nisar said the three countries have considered to undertake a walk along the pipeline route to have a on-ground assessment. UNOCAL has also done so, he recalled.

# Poppy cultivation increases in Afghanistan

News 990430

From Shamim Shahid

**PESHAWAR** — The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan claims to have initiated a drive against the drug abuse, with demolishing some 34 heroin manufacturing laboratories in one of the eastern provinces but certain authenticated reports apprehend upto 40 per cent increase in the opium production in several provinces of the country which has made the policy-makers of United Nations Drugs Control the programme (UNDCP) uncertain.

The reports disclosed that in Farah province, which is surrounded by Nimroz, Hirat and Ghor provinces in southern region has produced some 22.34 metric tonnes of opium in 1998 last but now there is an increase of 24 per cent in the poppy plants, to be harvested within one to two months. In all over Afghanistan, opium is being removed from plants during the months of April and May. However, in some of the Northern and Western provinces, the harvesting process of the poppy plants would be completed by the end of June.

Beside Farah province, there may be 22 per cent increase in the opium production at Nimroz province. Last year in 1998 some 6.33 metric tonnes of opium was produced in that part of Afghanistan. However, 40 per cent increase in opium production is expected in Qandahar, Helmand and Zabul areas which is considered too much fertile for opium production. Only at Qandahar in 1998 some 10.76 metric tonnes of opium was produced. Likewise is the figures reported from other provinces and parts of Afghanistan either governed by Taliban or by their lone rival Ahmad Shah Masud. The reports reveal that overall increase in opium production may not be less than 40 per cent.

Due to continue fighting and uncertainty, the provinces including Badakhshan, Takhar, Kapisa and Kunduz also considered most opium-producing parts of Afghanistan. In 1998, the UNDCP and other NGO's reported some 65 metric tonnes of opium production and this year they are expecting an increase from 35 to 40 per cent. In fact, Badakhshan, which is surrounded by

Tadjikistan and a number of other Central Asian Republics is also known for heroin manufacturing and provide safe routes to the drug traffickers not only to European countries through Central Asian Republics but also to the Karachi sea port through the mountaneous Chitral district. The opium, mostly produced in Bajaur and Mohmand Agencies of the tribal belt and Dir district of NWFP also poured into Badakhshan province for converting into heroin.

While the UNDCP report, recently issued reveals that until 1993 the only statistics available about the volume of opium production came from the US State Department, which put the figures at an improbable 690 tonnes. In the spring of 1994 an investigation by the UNDCP, based on exhaustive data collected in the field put production at 3200 and 3300 tonnes. While in 1995, the UNDCP figures about opium production are 1250 tonnes.

The annual report of UNDCP says that Afghanistan produced between 2,200 tonnes and 2,300 tonnes of dried opium which is 30 per cent higher than fresh opium in 1996. Two third of this (1481.11 t) came from the southern provinces which have been under Taliban control for more than a year. Farah, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan, Kandahar and Zabul are southern provinces of Afghanistan. In east of Afghanistan, Kunar reportedly produced 0.36 tonnes of dried opium and Nangarhar 679.82 tonnes, an almost identical harvest to that of 1995. There was similar relative stability in the north which the Taliban do not control; Badakhshan went from 60.15 tonnes in 1995 to 65.68 in 1996. Balkh, one time the strong hold of Rashid Dostam has produced some 21.43 tonnes annually opium.

With the Taliban taking control of three-quarters of Afghan territory in August 1998, many democratic countries view this as a triumph of obscurantism, terrorist support, the oppression of women and human rights violation. For some of Afghanistan neighbours in Iran, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia, which has put its troops stationed on the Afghan-Tadjik border on alert, the Taliban victory also evokes

of an increased flow of drugs into their countries.

In November 1997, when the Taliban were already in control of the main opium-producing zones for the previous three years (while poppies were grown in 55 districts in 9 provinces in 1994 m, 74 districts in 15 provinces were involved in 1998), the new United Nations Drugs Control Programme (UNDCP) Director Italian criminologist Pino Arlacchi conducted negotiations with the Taliban in an effort to convince them progressively stamp out poppy crops in exchange for economic investments. Although these informally agreements were criticised but with its help, recently the UNDCP authorities succeeded in an advancement regarding demolishing of 34 heroin-manufacturing laboratories in the eastern province of Afghanistan.

According to the reports in 1997 Afghanistan remained the world largest opium production country of the world and similar was the position in 1998. However, in 1999 Afghanistan is not only may in a position to maintain such a status but it would give a sharp increase in the opium production which may be upto 40 per cent. In current year poppy plants have been cultivated in more than 90 districts from all over Afghanistan. The Afghan ulema as well as some of the Taliban leaders regard opium production as an economic necessity. Even the Taliban rulers getting Zakat over production of opium in their controlled areas from the farmers while its business is legal in all bazars, particularly in the rural areas of that country.

At present, the figures about the farmers involved in the opium production is still awaited by the UNDCP figures reveal that in 1997 last some 200,000 farmers have cultivated poppy plants on an area of 58,000 hectares of land which estimatedly produced some 2,800 tons of dried opium. While in 1998 last, the UNDCP confirmed dramatic increase in the opium production. And the afghans who recently returned from various parts of Afghanistan, have said that almost of the agriculture land came under poppy cultivation in all over that country.



# Afghan drug control needs world support

FP 990436

ISLAMABAD — Under Taliban rule, Afghanistan is facing pressures on several fronts. Terrorism, human rights, ethnic cleansing, fundamentalism and narcotics are some of the main impediments that had jammed the country's march towards future since the fall of the Communist regime seven years ago.

The latest blow that hit Afghanistan came in the form of denial of United States Presidential Certification of Nations' Anti-drug Efforts to the country for its weak record in anti-drug moves in 1998. The only other state which also did not qualify for certification is Burma. Pakistan, Colombia and Mexico add to the list of 22 lucky countries or dependent territories that have been certified as either cooperating fully with the US or taking adequate steps on their own to combat the menace of illicit drugs.

The refusal of the Presidential Certification, which was announced on February 26, 1999 meant a substantial restriction in most forms of US assistance to Afghanistan at a time when the country really needs foreign support for propelling a structure to stand on. Now there will be a complete cut-off of non-food assistance though aid will be provided to Afghanistan for specified types of humanitarian and counter-narcotics assistance.

In case of Afghanistan, US does not stop at only the denial of certification. It goes further. Taliban officials have been told categorically that if they want recognition of their government, they should show responsibility with respect to drug control, human rights and terrorism. The US believes that Taliban receive a significant source of revenue from drug activities. The official documents, believing in credible reports, say that Taliban officials collected fees to permit the unhindered operation of laboratories. In late 1997, a fairly high-ranking Taliban official acknowledged that local Mullahs collect a 10 per cent

duced 1,350 metric tons of opium gum in 1998 as against the total production of 1,265 metric tons in 1997. Also opium poppy cultivation increased from 39,150 hectares (ha) in 1997 to 41,720 ha in 1998, registering an increase of seven percent. The raise in poppy cultivation was witnessed at a time when Taliban admitted that intoxicants including opiates, its cultivation, manufacturing and

trafficking were contrary to Islam and Shariah. In 1997, Taliban condemned illicit drug cultivation, its production and trafficking. That sent positive signals across the world. The US reports, however, suspect Taliban's anti-drug policy as they (the reports) did not find any evidence, which could corroborate that Taliban acted in 1998 for decrease in poppy cultivation or arrested or prosecuted major narcotics traffickers. Neither, the reports say, Taliban interdicted large shipments of illicit drugs or precursor chemicals during the last year, rather, it adds opium remained a major cash crop and narcotics perhaps the largest source of income in Afghanistan.

Though Taliban made some progress in law-enforcement in 1999 by taking action against the heroin laboratories in the eastern province of Nangrahar, the US is, however, not sure about authenticity of such reports without any external confirmation. "We are yet to assess Taliban claims about the destruction of heroin factories," told James R. McHugh US Councillor of Narcotics Affairs in Pakistan to a group of journalists in the first week of March.

Similarly the destruction of factories in southern Helmand province in 1998 could also not be verified. The governor of that province had claimed of demolishing a few laboratories in May last year. But again due to lack of external verification his claims were not taken for a real progress in controlling the danger of drugs.

The United States and Europe, both are seriously concerned about narcotics trade in Afghanistan. According to US official reports, 80 per cent of the Afghan-based illicit drugs find their primary destination in Europe. The rest go to North America. The reports on drug flow and transit in Afghanistan say that heroin and morphine base are trafficked across Afghanistan's borders to the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran. A small portion of drugs is consumed in these countries as most of them are destined for highly profitable markets of Europe and US, which adds to the anxiety of America and other European states.

Then if we look at the chemicals used in drugs, they also enter Afghanistan from Europe, Central Asia and India.

The US reports also verify the fact that acetic anhydride—an essential item used in the manufacturing of heroin and morphine, come to Afghanistan from Europe, India and Central Asia.

Afghanistan is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, which makes it bound to take steps for the eradication of illicit drugs. However, neither of the warring factions, since the eruption of civil war

in that country, demonstrated to take Afghanistan's obligations seriously under the Drug Convention. Taliban and Northern Alliance are not an exception. The US holds both of them, particularly Taliban performance in controlling drugs.

Taking action against poppy cultivation or drug traffickers is not an easy task in a country like Afghanistan. However, to build more pressure on Taliban or for that matter on the Northern Alliance will not help them achieve any progress in curbing the illicit drug threats. And if the target is to move ahead with the task of drugs control then it could only be attained through proper understanding among Taliban leadership, donor agencies and, of course, the United States.

None among them can push aside the realities on the ground while dealing with the drug problem in Afghanistan. The poverty in that country and its highly volatile situation make Taliban helpless to put a ban on poppy cultivation. It's not like forcing people to pray five times, for, in that case people lose nothing in terms of economics. On the other hand, banning poppy cultivation in Afghanistan at this stage will mean a serious financial loss for the farmers there. Being a major cash crop, people could hardly be convinced to avoid poppy cultivation. Even the US reports on Afghanistan admit the fact that poppy is a major cash crop in the war-ravaged country.

The question of alternative arrangements arises here. When arrangements are made for feeding the stomachs of hundreds of thousands of Afghans from sources other than the money from poppy there is no doubt that they would themselves stop its cultivation. Taliban have also linked the fulfilment of the international obligations regarding the drug control with the disposal of alternative development assistance to the rural communities and areas known for poppy cultivation. It may be good or bad but it is, no doubt, natural that evil can only be omitted from the society

## Situationer

By Nafees Takkar

religious tax called "usher" on opium crops produced by farmers. In 1998, it was learnt that local Mullahs collected tax in opium gum, which then they sold to the same drug traders who buy opium from the farmers. The reports further indicated that "both Taliban and North-

ern Alliance officials received payments from drug traffickers to facilitate the shipment of heroin and morphine through Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is the world's second largest opium poppy producer as per US calculations of 1998, showing Burma on the top of the list. The country is also a major producer of hashish. The US estimates show that Afghanistan pro-

Forts need  
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when good things are given to it.

Then there is lack of understanding among the main actors. United Nations and US demand a responsible behaviour on drug control from Taliban but at the same time the latter are not recognised by the farmers. Taliban were not invited in the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Drugs in June last year. The Rabbani government was, instead, invited to represent Afghanistan on drug issue at UN level. Similarly, according to the US reports Taliban were disappointed at the slow pace of implementation of alternative development schemes. Taliban themselves funded rehabilitation of two factories in Kandahar last year. They contrasted the small amount of money being spent by United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) on development schemes with what they considered inordinate sums consumed by UNDCP's operational expenses.

Illicit drugs are to be condemned and so its production, trafficking and use. None among us can afford to defend the cause of drugs but taking suitable measures for its total devastation is an international longing. The anti-drugs efforts vary from country to country. Afghanistan being a war-ravaged country presents a totally different and complicated picture in respect of poppy cultivation and illicit drug trade. Here the anti-narcotics measures must be different from the ones that are being taken in Mexico or Pakistan where the governments are in a better position in providing alternative arrangements and the enforcement of law. The international community needs more to do for drug control in countries like Afghanistan as local authorities attach their more importance to pointing scores in the battlefield. And the role of world community should not be based, essentially, on the politics of pressure. Rather, the principles of support and assistance should guide that specific role of the international community at large to control illicit drugs in Afghanistan.

## 'Iran has taken concrete steps to stop drug-trafficking

Washington 990505

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR — Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has become a centrifugal station due to major drug producing countries in the east and its lucrative markets of consumption in European countries, its rulers have contributed a lot to the global efforts against the drugs menace in the last several years.

Besides establishing joint security posts with the Pakistani authorities on its eastern borders, it has stationed over 3,000 security guards on the borders with Afghanistan, which is considered the biggest drug producing station.

An official of the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad has claimed that Iran has done a lot to get rid of drug trafficking.

Surrounded by a number of countries like Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Turkey, Iranian borders have become a safe haven for the drug-traffickers. Afghanistan is the largest drugs producing country, almost all the traffickers use the Iranian borders with Turkey. The papers reveal that almost all the foreign nationals involved in drug trafficking have been apprehended on its borders with Turkey.

However, the Taliban's rule over Afghanistan has further augmented the problems of the Iranian authorities. The documents state, "there are evidences showing that presently some terrorists groups including Monafeghin (hypocrites) Organisation (MKO), have started drug-trafficking. The documents also included a photo copy of a letter issued by the Octroi Department of Shinwar district of Nangarhar Province of Afghanistan which shows that Taliban have received Octroi (Customs

Duty) for four kilograms of white goods. Such steps on the part of Taliban leaders encourage the drug traffickers to promote their business."

Being a signatory to the UN charter and other international charters for combating drug abuse, Iran has sacrificed some 2635 personnel of its law enforcing agencies to control the drug-trafficking. The Islamic Republic of Iran shares 1925 kilometers borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The important documents prepared by the Drugs Control Headquarter in Iran, have revealed that in September 1998 over 7,000 foreign nationals had been apprehended on drug trafficking charges in Iran. Majority of them belonged to Afghanistan and Pakistan. So far, 3516 accused have been convicted in drug trafficking. According to documents, in 1997, some 1547 foreign nationals were arrested by the personnel of Drugs Control agencies.

As a result of the infighting in Afghanistan, a large number of its war-affected people have not only engaged themselves in drug trafficking but many of them have become addicts. In 1997, a number of drug addicted people were imprisoned by the Iranian authorities included 7600 Afghan nationals.

About the seizure of drugs, the documents reveal that during 1997, the Iranian security agencies seized 194,702 kg which included 162413 opium, 1986 kg of heroin, 11095 kg of hashish, 11700 kg of cocaine and 255,065 kg of other drugs. Mr Ismael Sadaat, First Secretary and the Drug Liaison Officer in the Iranian Embassy at Islamabad, during an informal chat, said that Iran was sincere in efforts against the drug abuse.

## Taliban deny assisting Mohmand tribesmen

Bureau Report

News 990414

PESHAWAR: Taliban on Tuesday denied reports of assisting Mohmand tribesmen against the NWFP government's move to merge the hitherto de facto tribal area with Charsadda district.

Maulavi Najibullah, Afghanistan's Consul General in Peshawar, in a statement, reaffirmed Taliban's policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of all countries, particularly Pakistan, which, he said, had helped the Afghans in their hour of trial and tribulations when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and had been continuing to assist the Afghans on humanitarian grounds. Afghans, he said, would never want to create problems for Pakistan and could never think of helping those who wanted to create problems.

Pakistan, he said, was a brotherly muslim country and those who spread baseless rumours did not want the brotherly relations to flourish between the two countries to achieve their own goals.

# Mines kill or maim 300 Afghans every month

By the Staff of the AFP

KABUL (AFP) - In Afghanistan, one of the most heavily mined countries on earth, farmers run an everyday risk of losing their limbs, cattle and even their lives as they work the land amid shifting frontlines, UN officials say.

UN figures show intensified demining has cut casualties by half, but at least 300 civilians including farmers are killed or maimed monthly by mines, said Latif Marini, head of the UN demining agency in Kabul.

Most adults fall victim while carrying out the vital tasks of herding and tending crops, as well as gathering food and water and travelling around the countryside.

Marini said 223 square kilometers of the total 26,000 square kilometers of cultivable land in Afghanistan was still mined.

Many more farms lie useless because of the weapons that infect irrigation systems and a multi-million-dollar clearing programme has made safe only 164 square kilometers of land.

The non-governmental organisation Handicap International recently estimated there were 10 million mines in Afghanistan.

Main said landmines were responsible for annual losses of about \$1,000 tonnes of cereal with a total value of more than 13.7 million US dollars.

'The mine-related problem of Afghan farmers is hugely serious and is among our top priority tasks,' he said. Farmers are particularly vulnerable because of the fluidity of frontlines — typically a warning faction holds a village for a short period and mines it before it is kicked out by a rival group.

# Taliban bomb opposition bases after losing ground

By the Staff of the AFP

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban jets bombed northeastern Afghanistan's Takhar province Monday killing 10 civilians and wounding 70 others as opposition forces in a pre-dawn attack seized some areas in neighbouring Kunduz, an anti-Taliban source said.

Taliban planes carried out four sorties on Taloqan city, the provincial capital of Takhar hitting shopping centres when residents were in the bazaar, a senior opposition spokesman Abdullah said.

The raids left 10 people dead and more than 70 injured, he said adding that most of the victims were villagers who had come from adjoining areas including Badkshan province to the city's popular weekly market.

Abdullah said the air strikes came after forces of northern military strongman Ahmad Shah Masood launched an attack from Takhar against the Taliban-held Kunduz province.

They dismantled the religious militia's frontlines on the main road and advanced seven kilometers west of the key town of Khanabad, he added. 'Our forces captured Puli Bangi on the main road,' he said, adding the operation was 'actively supported by popular uprising' in the area.

He said 32 Taliban fighters were killed and 82 wounded while 18 were taken

prisoner.

No independent confirmation was immediately available for the opposition claim. The spokesman put the alliance losses at seven killed and 12 wounded.

Abdullah said heavy fighting was going on around Khanabad, which controls access to Kunduz city strategically located on the Tajikistan border.

He said a small district of Aq Tepa, north of Kunduz city, also fell to Masood supporters after the local population rose against the Taliban.

Taliban soldiers based in Kunduz launched two counter-attacks to recover the lost territory including a large area on both sides of the Kunduz-Takhar road but they remained 'unsuccessful,' he said.

No Taliban spokesman was immediately available for comment.

Taliban control about 75 per cent of Afghanistan while the opposition alliance holds several provinces in northern Afghanistan.

Abdullah said the Taliban militia attacked four opposition posts in Guldara district 25 kilometers north of Kabul late Sunday but the attacks were blunted.

The headline Taliban last month lost control of central Bamyan province to the opposition Hezbi-Wahdat faction of mainly Shia Muslims.

# Three major Afghan Shi'ite groups form alliance

By the Staff of the AFP

TEHRAN: Nine leaders of three Shi'ite groups of Afghanistan announced coalition of the three groups following their talks in Iran.

The alliance, called 'Supreme Council of Islamic coalition of Afghanistan' will help the three parties to further consolidate their forces and strongholds, said a statement faxed to IRNA by the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan Sunday night.

It will also close ranks among parties members in the United Front to double their efforts with regard to the current political developments.

The draft agreement for the coalition was prepared by a three-member commission comprising Syed Mohammad Ali Javed of the Islamic Movement Party, Shalag Sarpoli of the Islamic Unity Party (Mohammad Akbari's faction) and Shalag Behsoudi of the Islamic Unity Party Abdolkarim Khaili's faction). The draft was then handed over to the nine-member session after necessary consultations.

The three Shi'ite Muslim parties discussed the issue of coalition in the holy city of Qom, Iran, three months ago in a session which was attended by leader of the Islamic Movement Party Ayatollah Mohseni Karim Khaili, head of the Central Council of one of the factions of the Islamic Unity Party and Seyyed Hossein Alami Balkhi (Akbari faction).

The objective of the coalition is to bolster peace policy, explore grounds for realisation of national unity, render further support for the policies of the United Front and consolidation of ranks of Shi'ite Muslims. — AFP

# Taliban deny visa to Pakistani journalists

NEWS 8/5-99

ISLAMABAD: Taliban have barred Pakistani journalists to visit Afghanistan to cover the massive anti-polio vaccination campaign in the war-ravaged country begins on May 9.

The UNICEF had arranged visit for journalists from Peshawar and Islamabad but Taliban embassy in Islamabad and consulate in Peshawar denied visas to journalists.

The journalists were planned to proceed to Jalalabad, Kandahar and Herat to witness the three-day immunization campaign.

Taliban have stopped issuing visas to Pakistan journalists after reports that the student militia killed a large number of civilians when they captured Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamiyan.

The UNICEF office in Islamabad had also sent request to the Taliban embassy in Islamabad and their consulate in Peshawar but the plea was

turned down.

Meanwhile, various journalist groups have condemned ban on Pakistani journalists by Taliban authorities.

President Rawalpindi Press Club and secretary general Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Fauzia Shahid have condemned restrictions on Pakistani reporters by Taliban and described it as move to suppress freedom of expression.

The press club president said Taliban had disappointed Pakistani journalist community by refusing them visas and urged the militia central leadership to take serious notice of the Taliban ambassador Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rahman Haqqani and consul general Maulvi Naeemi.

Fauzia Shahid said that ban on Pakistani journalists would further damage the reputation of Taliban and it will lead to resentment among Pakistani journalists.—NNI

## Taliban regain control of Bamiyan

NEWS 10/5-99

KABUL: The Taliban militia Sunday recaptured the central Afghan city of Bamiyan from the opposition northern alliance, Taliban Information Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said. "Bamiyan was recaptured today after the operation began from two sides to the north and south of the city," he told AFP.

The Taliban had lost the city to the pro-Iranian Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the anti-Taliban northern alliance amid a reported uprising on April 21.

Bamiyan, a stronghold of the Shia community, was earlier seized by the Taliban in September last year. Muttaqi said the militia troops entered Bamiyan from the north "as a result of a coordinated attack by the Taliban soldiers and local people of Saighan and Kahmard." He said the Taliban also captured Haji Gak Pass in the southern flank. The attack was mounted early Sunday at 4:00 am, he said, adding "resistance was very min-

imal". "The enemy soldiers are only in Yakwlang," a town located 50 kilometres west of Bamiyan, Muttaqi said.

Independent confirmation of the Taliban claim was not immediately available. An official of the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction said "we have no report". "May be it is wrong." However, he said there was fighting on the western side of the city.

The Afghan Islamic Press later said dozens of Wahdat soldiers were killed in the fighting, while at least 50 had been taken prisoner. The state of "lawlessness prevailing in Bamiyan for the past many days has come to an end," a Taliban official was quoted as telling the private news service.

Bamiyan, famous for the world's largest Buddhist statues, is considered the main centre of the ethnic Hazara community opposed to the Taliban. The militia earlier said heavy

fighting was continuing in northern Kunduz province and around the strategically important Salang Tunnel. "An offensive from Bangi (Kunduz) was repulsed. Some of the enemy personnel including commanders were killed or captured," the militia said in an official Radio Shariat broadcast.

The statement followed claims by the opposition alliance that it had captured Dawre Khanabad and a power plant at Band-i-Barq in the same province. Khanabad district links Kunduz to Takhar and the provincial capital of Taloqan, where the alliance holds an extensive support network.

Independent sources have confirmed heavy Taliban aerial bombardments in the area. The Radio Shariat broadcast made no mention of a Taliban counter offensive at Bamiyan. It said Taliban troops had clashed with the alliance north of the Salang Tunnel, a vital supply route through the Hindu Kush mountain range, linking north and south Afghanistan.

"From Andrab and northern Salang, the enemy launched an attack which was repulsed. Five enemy personnel were killed and three were wounded," the broadcast said.—AFP

Continued on Page 8

# "Our primary targets are the world's infidels"

— Osama Bin Laden

From Rahimullah Yusufzai in southwestern Afghanistan.

**Q:** You have been labelled "public enemy No. 1" by the U.S. government. How can a person, who is on the radio and is not being hunted, become a threat to the world's only superpower?

**A:** To be called enemy number one or number two doesn't hurt us. America is mistaken if it thinks Osama Bin Laden alone can fight such a great cause. I am confident that 12,000 million Muslims, with the help of God, will be able to end the legend of the so-called superpower that is America.

**Q:** You were issuing statements by the Taliban and their leader Mulla Mohammad Omar, who reportedly said that two million non-Muslims should not exist in Afghanistan. Were you involved in this order and will you abide by it in future?

**A:** Mulla Mohammad Omar managed to unite Afghanistan, which was divided into five tiny states due to millennia-long infighting. America, through its agents, and especially some Arab countries and Pakistan, managed to perpetuate the division of the

This was the first interview in seven months — and the first since the US missile attack on the camp in Khost, southern Afghanistan, on August 20, 1998. Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, who had restrained the legendary Osama Bin Laden from speaking to the press after the US attack last August, gave him the green signal apparently to let him draw the involvement in acts of terrorism and alleged rumours that he was seriously ill.

The interview was conducted at night in a tent in Bin Laden's desert entrenchment somewhere near Kandahar. Security was tight in that area and Bin Laden, wanted by the US for masterminding the August 7 bombings on two of its embassies in Africa that killed 224 people, kept an AK-47 assault rifle by his side all the time. Excerpt, from the four-hour long interview...



strongest Islamic people in this region, I let Osama Bin Laden into a room in the Soviet Union into a night. The Taliban are not a creation of America or Pakistan as the media likes to portray. Their enemies' wrongs were made possible by God and by popular support. The Taliban state has been subjected to great pressure and its agents, with the support of the communist and by America, through its agents in the Arab region and Pakistan, in order to silence has been going on for a long time. But the Taliban have taken a principled position, dictated by their great faith in my cause. It isn't a political stance as depicted.

**Q:** Do you have any option in case the Taliban ask you to leave Afghanistan? Which country would accept you and where would you feel safer? And, secondly, do you expect more attacks on Afghanistan by the US

and other western countries in case you continue to live in Afghanistan?

**A:** Leaving Afghanistan is not something that we foresee. We do not expect to be driven out of this land. However, God's earth is large and wide. When a Muslim migrates repeatedly, he is doubly rewarded. We pay to God to make our migration a migration in his cause. An attack against Afghanistan does not target an individual, neither Mulla Omar nor Osama Bin Laden. Having missed the banner of Islam and started to seek to apply the Sunnah, Afghanistan has become a target of the Crusader-Jewish alliance.

We expect Afghanistan to be bombarded. That is why we, together with our brothers, live on these mountains, far away from Muslims in villages and towns, in order to spare them any harm. We expect attacks that would target Afghanistan as a Muslim nation and all Muslims should support it. Muslims and Muslim merchants, in particular, should give their Zakat and their money in support of Afghanistan which is emblematic of the state of Medina (Al-Madina), where the followers of Islam embraced the Prophet of God (PBUH).

"For the American forces to expect anything from me personally reflects a very narrow perception of his case."

Mujahideen groups have said that you are involved in terrorist activities and they are also calling for your expulsion from Afghanistan. Is it because you are close to the Taliban or because they want the support of the US and western governments?

**A:** God gave the former mujahideen the privilege of raising the banner of jihad against the Soviet Union. This highest power was bestowed. We have been saddened by the fact that some of those who participated in jihad during that important phase have stumbled and, attracted by power and pelf, now say things that hurt them and hurt the reputation of Muslims and the mujahideen. I can only say for us God and His angels are the best disposer of affairs.

**Q:** Why is it that people in the Islamic countries are denouncing against the US-British attack on Iraq but their governments are either neutral or less critical of it?

**A:** The tremendous attack against Iraq by the US and Britain has confirmed that they are acting on behalf of Israel and the Jews, to pave the way for the Jews to divide the Muslim world once again. A great part of the force that erupted out the attack came from certain Gulf countries, which undermined the fact that they have lost their sovereignty. Now infidels walk everywhere on the land where Muhammad (PBUH) was born, call on all Muslims to resist this Crusader-Jewish invasion. The rulers have become pawns and will meet the fate of the Shah of Iran. The people are the ones who will pay the price. Unless the poor and righteous people come forward to defend God, Kari Jah and God's religion, everything will perish.

**Q:** Are the charges levelled by the US government that you organised the bombing of the two US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, true?

**A:** We, in the International Islamic Front for Jihad against the US and Israel, have issued a fatwa calling on our Islamic nation to carry on jihad to liberate Islamic holy sites, and the ancient houses (Hok) of Arabia, and Al-Aqsa Mosque and all Islamic lands. The nation of Muhammad (PBUH) has responded to this appeal. If the call for jihad against the Jews and the Americans is considered a crime, let history be a witness that I am a criminal.

**Q:** When we last spoke to you in May in Khost (Afghanistan), you warned that Americans would die... then, two months later, the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam were bombed. Were these bombings the result of your fatwa against Americans?

**A:** We have repeatedly issued warnings over a number of years. Following these warnings and calls, anti-American explosions took place in a number of Islamic countries. Most probably, these acts came about as a result of such calls and warnings, but only God knows the truth.

**Q:** If the targets of the jihad are Americans, how can the deaths of so many Africans and others be justified?

**A:** The question presupposes that it is I who carried out these explosions. My answer is that I understand the motives of the brothers who carry out acts of jihad against the enemies of our nation. Suppose that the Americans had attacked an Islamic country and kidnapped my children, the children of Osama Bin Laden, to use as a shield, then I would start to kill Muslims as the case in Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq and Bosnia. If we abstain from firing on the Americans, let us should kill the

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sympathise with the infidels, such as the PLO in Palestine have been trying for tens of years to get back some of their rights, and they laid down their arms and abandoned what is called ‘violence’ these days and ran after peaceful bargaining but what did the Jews give them? They did not give them even one per cent of their rights.”

been trying to lighten its economic blacked against us, and to arrest me, it has failed in achieving its objective. As for being driven from one land to another, this is the nature of war. You was some and you lost some. Muslims were able to defend and save them out of Somalia, as they expected them before, from Aden. This blockade doesn't hurt us much. We expect to be rewarded by God.

**Q. You have become a role model for many Muslims, and in Pakistan a number of groups have named their sons Osama. Is your Islamic message actually having an impact?**

**A.** We are pleased by the widespread response across the whole Muslim world, in particular from the people of Pakistan. I was named after one of the venerable companions of the Prophet, Osama bin Zaid. When people call their children Osama, we consider that they do that after him. The world of change have thrown in order to remove the injustice to which he would have been subjected by his enemies, the Jews, and their collaborators in India, at whose instigation he was killed. Osama bin Zaid was a man who ruled for over 30 years as a noble and just ruler, bringing his people freedom, his people living in the best of conditions. The Muslims in the Arab countries, respectively, is doing the same these days. But things will change.

**Q. While you have your adherents in the Muslim countries several of them have reservations on your support to the use of force to achieve Islamic objectives?**

**A.** Jihad is part of our religion. Is there another way to drive away the infidels? Those who sympathise with the infidels, such as the PLO in Palestine, or the so-called Palestinian authority, have been trying for tens of years to get back some of their rights, and they laid down their arms and abandoned what is called ‘violence’ these days, and ran after peaceful bargaining but what did the Jews give them? They did not give them even one per cent of their rights. ■

Muslims used by them as shields, the harm that could befall Muslims at large outweighs the good of saving the lives of those Muslims used as a shield. So, in a case like this, when it becomes apparent that it would be impossible to arrest these American without assassinating them, even if this involved the killing of Muslims, this should be considered permissible under Islam. However, real reports said that most of those killed were members of the American embassy in Saudi, which housed the largest CIA centre in Africa. Still, many people were saddened by the death of some innocent people outside the embassy's building.

**Q. This US has also formally changed that you are trying to change the definition of weapons and perceive the definition of arms and weapons. How would such weapons be used?**

**A.** Acquiring weapons for the defence of Muslims is a religious duty. To seek to possess weapons that could counter those of the infidels is a religious obligation. If I have indeed acquired these weapons, then this is an obligation I cannot out and I thank God for enabling us to do that. It would be an sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harm on Muslims. But how we use these weapons if we possess them is up to us.

**Q. Did you know the men who were arrested for the bombing in Kenya and Tanzania?**

**A.** What I do know is that those who risked their lives to earn the pleasure of God are the true men. They managed to rid the Islamic nation of the infidels, and pay to God to accept them as martyrs and grant them to intercede on behalf of their kin.

**Q. Since the bombings, the US has increased its forces in Saudi Arabia and recently used them to help in the arrested air strikes on Iraq. What support do you expect from you?**

**A.** The American forces should a



A Bin Laden at a press conference at Khosr in southwestern Afghanistan.

expect reaction to their actions from the Muslim world. Any threat the criminal or robber who enters the countries of others is to be dealt with. It should expect of others in order to stand at any time. For the American forces to expect anything from me personally reflects a very minor perception of things. The latest events have proved the extent of the anger of Muslims masses all over the world. The American forces should expect several attacks on its embassies?

**A.** For each attack, there is a reaction. We realise how angry Muslims were at the commemoration of the conference at the sidelines of the nation of Muhammad (PBUH). We pay to God to help Muslims expel the American and Jews from Islamic countries.

**Q. Who are all these men who claim that they were trained in your camps and were inspired by you?**

**A.** These men are messengers, some of them are people who say they are acting directly on your behalf. I wish Al-Hage says he was once your personal aide. Who reactions from the Muslim world which are proportionate to the injustice these forces inflict.

**Q. What was the effect of the air strikes on your camps? There were rumours that you were hurt?**

**A.** The American bombardment has only shown that the world is governed by the law of the jungle. Before the investigations the Nairobi explosion were completed and, in fact, on the day when the person in charge of the investigation team was travelling to Nairobi to complete the investigation, Afghanistan was bombarded without any justification. This brutal, reckless attack killed a number of Afghan Muslims in the province of Khosr. May God accept all of them as martyrs. As for the material damage, it was minimal. By the grace of God, the missiles were ineffective.

**Q. After the missile attack on your camp, you sent word to me “The war has just begun. American should await the answer.” Since then, the US says it has prevented**

a conference. Muhammad Salim is a righteous Sheikh, who has witnessed the Quran. He was our Imam in Pakistan. He had worked for a long time with Islamic relief organisations operating from Pakistan. We had a special relationship with him during that phase. He was never a member of any political organisation or of Al-Qaida. The fact of the matter is that America, and in particular the CIA, wanted to cover up their failure in the aftermath of the events in Riyadh, Karachi, Sana'a, Tammim, Cape Town, Kampul, and other places, and that they did by arresting any person who had participated in the jihad in Afghanistan.

**Q. Has there been any contact between you and the Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki Al-Faisal, and you in Afghanistan. Has there been any change in your views on the Saudi and family, the government, and on the presence of US and western troops in Saudi Arabia?**

**A.** The Saudi government sent several delegations to negotiate with me in Sudan to convince me to keep silent on the unjust American occupation of Saudi Arabia. We received these attempts. Prince Turki Al-Faisal came to familiarise several times, and met Muhi Muhammad Anwar. He asked him to surrender us to him to to expel us from Afghanistan. The fists and the requests came to nothing, which surprised the Saudi spies.

After the explosion in Nairobi and Dera-Salam, were if there was a difference between me and those who carried them out, the Saudi regime had no business to ask for Osama Bin Laden, who was stripped of his right by birth, nationality which is his right by birth, whose assets were frozen, and who was forced to sever all relations with his kin. The Taliban were surprised when the Saudi regime demanded my arrest or execution, because it was as if they had a secret deal after the fact with such a criminal after the failure of the last visit by Bill

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# Four days with the Taliban

ar in the country, the life goes on. People are living under miserable conditions. aspect of life including health, education, social activities etc. A first-hand account

AFGHANISTAN'S KUNAR province straddles the Pakistan Border along the Hindukush mountain range. It is 10,479 sq. km in area and according to the 1981 census its population is 262,000. Kunar is a mountainous country where the first bullet was fired against the communists. It was also home to the bloodiest battles against the Russian occupation and dreaded by the Russian soldiers because of its mountains and narrow gorges.

We planned to visit this province to get a first hand experience of living with a Taliban commander, Syed Amir Bacha. On the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> December, I left for the border town of Bajaur also known as Khar. Having arrived in Bajaur that evening, we had to establish a contact with Fazlur Rehman who lives on the Pakistani side of the border. The border is clearly defined by the Hindukush range, separating the two countries at the top. The crossing point is called Ghaki Top, situated at an elevation of 6500 ft. The following day we crossed the border at about noon. The distance between the two border barricades is less than 10 ft from the top. We saw the green mountains of Kunar in front of us. The terrain on the Pakistani side is very dry. After the mandatory Friday prayers with the Taliban border guards, we took another pickup on the Afghan side of the border for Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province. We arrived in Asadabad at around 1600 hours. Since it was not advisable to travel onwards to Asmar the same day we settled in for the night at an abandoned Russian barrack, now property of the Taliban government.

## The Blind Men of Asadabad

Our contact was Syed Abrar who trains the blind people to help them to manage their lives without relying on others. At the height of the war against the Russians these blind people would just sit in some corner of the house unable to do anything on their own. An old man, Gul Mohammad lost his eyesight because of small pox. He bore scars from the bruises he sustained when he would walk into trees and other obstacles. After the Russian invasion of Afghanistan he made his way to Pakistan, where he became a beggar. When the war ended he returned to his hometown, Asadabad. Things became difficult when anarchy spread and each group fought for control of the area. The rule of lawlessness meant that only the fittest prevailed. Gul Mohammad was robbed. They even took away his bedding. He said, "I regretted coming back". Today all he owns is a rundown mud hut. His three sons who have no possessions live on their own.

The warm winter sun was now setting and a steady breeze began to pick up speed. By nightfall it was a howling wind and soon it became unbearably cold, though the snow had not yet fallen. It had been an unusually dry December. People prayed for the snow even though life would become unbearable because the snow would also block the passes and hamper logistics and silence the guns. Even war takes a backseat in the harsh Afghan winter. At night several missiles landed on Asmar, the next major city on our route to Dangam. These were launched to prevent the Taliban from opening the road to the north that was blocked the previous day after the opposition forces of Ahmad Shah Masood set off explosives and sealed the road. The Taliban responded by sending in armor from Asadabad to clear the road and pushed the opposition forces back.

## The road to Dangam

Early in the morning we left for Dangam and reached Asmar. The road to Dangam was now open, though the town gave a deserted look as people stayed away from the main streets. The journey onwards was particularly tense as we left Asmar and banked right on the steep track to Dangam. Here we ran dangerously close to the opposition forces. Our guide told us to take off our turbans and hide them since the opposition does not like the Taliban. After a forty-minute drive for what seemed to be an eternity, we reached Dangam in the afternoon. Dangam is a valley where the opposition and the Taliban control the opposite sides of the mountain.

One could see that all key mountaintops were held by the opposing forces on each side. They were manned round the clock. Here people slept on the ground in small huts built next to their gun positions. Rockets and missiles were stacked on the improvised shelves. Others just lay on the pillows or on the makeshift bedding on the ground. The three men would take turns at guard duty at night as the other two slept. At set intervals the commander would call the fortifications and check if all was well. In case of firing, all the neighboring commanders within a radius of several miles would call each other by their code names to check the latest position and the origin of the fire.

After a late lunch and early evening tea we were instructed to go to the room prepared for our stay. No one ventures out after dark. There is no electricity and the guard dogs are unleashed. Besides, the threat of an ambush becomes greater once the sun sets.

## The war

Huddled around a wooden stove everyone talked about the war. The silence of the night was shattered by the sound of a missile launching. The people around suddenly became tense not knowing where it was going to land. Then as it exploded in the distance they could tell it was a miss and the conversations gained steam after a short but tense pause. These people had lived the past twenty years of their lives in war.

The next morning we were taken to a hilltop gun position, from where we could see most of the valley down below and the opposition positions in front. The white Taliban flag was hoisted here when the Taliban entered Kunar. Empty cases of ammo were neatly piled on the sides. A young boy made green tea for us and then the commander gave us a demo of the heavy machine gun. As soon as the firing stopped commanders from adjoining areas made frantic calls asking what happened. A few volleys into the air is enough to start a war here. Everyone was trigger happy and ready to fire back. Every time there is firing, the commanders can only find out by VHF from their friends. Most of the time the opposition also joins and there is an exchange of abuses. The older commanders always try to avert a confrontation, but the younger ones are looking for an excuse to blast each other.

## The children

There are no schools in Dangam. Only recently have the Taliban opened a madrassa, but it only imparts religious education. I asked a little girl, named Paykai whether she went to school and she said no because she did not have any books. The Madrassas are closed for three months. Saeed Maqsood who teaches there gets 4 dollars a month. He has to support a family of four. The head of the school

is also the head of the mosque, and while the mosque always remains open, the madrassa does not. Children find it entertaining when the guns open up on each other. They take their vantage seats as if it were a movie. Most of them imitate the elder fighters. They know the names of the guns and different rockets and missiles. Ironically, they are bright kids with a dark future. For them war has become a way of life, they have never known peace.

## The Women

For women the life on this planet is incarceration within the confines of their homes. Seldom do they venture out and if they travel, they walk at a snail's pace to avoid the rocks and difficult terrain. Looking through the mesh of the burqa is an arduous exercise. Most men do not want to take them out, and if they travel long distances they cannot eat in the roadside hotels since there are no separate facilities for them. I was particularly baffled by the sight in the bazaars of Asadabad and Asmar. For I did not see a single woman, just bearded men. It seemed they had all left the town or were forced into the prisons of their homes.

## The Medical scene

In most remote places including Dangam a medical emergency is often fatal. The sick are put on makeshift stretchers by using their beds and carried over difficult terrain. The shortest walk to the nearest doctor is three hours at the least. The injured have to be carried over high mountain passes often taking more than ten hours. Two such examples were Bacha Mir and Mohammad Karim who were injured by a mortar shell. They bled profusely as four men carried them tied to their beds for over ten hours before they could reach Bajaur, the nearest border town on the Pakistani side.

In Dangam there are no doctors, no medicines and people often prescribe their own medicine. Children are given heavy dosage of antibiotics for flu and colds. The medicines are brought from Pakistan and from Asmar, which is a three-hour walk from there. In most cases the medicine in Asmar are expired. Middlemen make a killing by dumping expired medicine in a society that is illiterate. No one can tell the difference.

On our third day we were told to leave since we were in danger. The impending war loomed closer by the hour. Hostilities would also mean the access would be blocked and we could be trapped indefinitely. Even though I was not satisfied with what we had achieved and our job was far from finished, we had to leave Dangam with disappointment and a heavy heart. We also knew that perhaps we would never see some of these people again. We reached Asmar at around 1230. There was no transport available to take us to Asadabad, so we started walking. After a few hours we saw a pickup truck full of people heading for Asadabad. We hopped on board and after a three-hour journey through dust and dirt we reached Asadabad looking more like a bunch of beggars.

It had now been four days since I took a bath. The bugs and insects had left their trails all over my body. Perhaps it was the only souvenir this war-ravaged country could offer for now. After another night's stay we proceeded for the border and crossed at the same point over Ghaki Top. I walked across to the Pakistani side of the border and saw Bajaur down below. The wind was nippy, and the past another country. ☾

# Breaking the stereotypes

07

The Russians left a long time ago. But more than two million Afghan refugees are still stranded in Pakistan. Labeled as drug traffickers, arms-peddlers and prostitutes, they are waging a Jihad for respectable survival here. While Great Game proxy-wars under sectarian and ethnic pretexts continue for the strategically located pieces of their land, humanitarian aid for them has dried up. They do not want to go home until the factional militancy and repression in Afghanistan is replaced by a pluralistic civil government based on broad consensus of Afghan citizens of all ethnicities

**Mubashir Zaidi**

THEY HAVE been labeled as a menace to Pakistani society, a bunch of drugs and arms smugglers and prostitutes. Dubbed as a burden that Pakistan has sustained for twenty years despite not being a signatory of 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. The police love to harass them. They have to take up petty jobs they never imagined they'd be reduced to. The cost of registration pushes most of them to live the lives of illegal immigrants. They blame the United Nations High Commission on Refugees and Taliban government for their miseries. Most of them want to go home, but fear for their lives as ethnic groups in Afghanistan continue to settle their differences through rocket launchers. Taliban's fight for control over the ruined territory has added to the problem.

In 1998, 18,309 Afghans crossed over to Pakistan. Most of them arrived in the last quarter of the year. A large majority of the new refugees are Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Nooristanis and Turkmens who are being targeted by the Pakhtoon-dominated incumbent Taliban government. Unlike the first waves of refugees, the more recent refugees come from educated urban backgrounds.

At present, there are almost 2 million Afghan refugees (registered, unregistered and illegal immigrants- GOP source) in Pakistan. The more recent influx of refugees is largely urban, as conflicts in Afghanistan have moved from mountaintops to cities and roadlinks sor of

between them. They are mostly literate, hard-working and generally peace-loving. The refugees from rural areas who came in the wake of the Soviet invasion earlier, and who can largely be held responsible for fostering most of the negative stereotypes against Afghans, have mostly gone back to their homeland. The urban Afghans had preferred to stay in Afghanistan when Mujahideen were up against the Russians or their puppet governments in Kabul. The Mujahideen groups fighting against each other for power eventually brought the war to the urban centers.

Pakistan has been a good host over all these years no doubt, accommodating successive waves of refugees in special camps as well as its cities. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees has noted Pakistan's positive role in dealing with the massive problem: "In Pakistan, refugees are allowed to work, and receive considerable government support in the education and health sectors." This is no small deal considering that the Afghans have remained the world's single largest refugee group for the 19<sup>th</sup> year running. And the largest chunk of this group has found refuge in Pakistan.

"What's the point in going back to Afghanistan when there are no employment opportunities, no room for women education and above all, no safety for the people who are not Pashto-speaking," a former professor



Selling qahwa in Islamabad for survival

Photos by Ishag Chaudhry

# Afghan company in Karachi Company

The Afghan enclave in Islamabad's G-9 Markaz is a mini-Kabul. *Wajahat Malik* mingled with refugees in Karachi Company to get a closer look at their life away from a ravaged home

"THERE IS plenty of good Afghan company in Karachi Company," smirked a friend, when I inquired about the Afghan community in Islamabad. Completely perplexed by his vague insinuation, I asked him to elaborate on his statement. "Come on man, don't you get it? There are lots of Afghan sunbines in that area of Islamabad," he said, closing one of his eyes. Annoyed at my friend's stereotypical godforsaken humor, I ventured into Karachi Company seeking Afghan sunbines and bearded clouds alike.

I'd heard the whole area is the hub of Afghan community but on that particular day it seemed as if all Afghans had vanished into thin air, for I could hardly spot an Afghan face in the thronging crowds. After a good while of roaming around in the Karachi Company market that seemed to unfold at every block, I finally came across the Afghan enclave. And sure enough there was plenty of Afghan company to be found there. At first I felt as if I had stumbled upon a mini-Kabul in the midst of Islamabad. Persian and Pushto music was blaring from the music and video stores with boards advertising in Urdu, aptly named Kabul Music Center and Pakista Video Shop etc.

Mongol-faced Uzbeks sweating profusely over their hot Tandoors were doling out boat shaped bread to their mostly Afghan customers. Afghan women, in striking contrast to their Pakistani counterparts, with their stylish long skirts, flowing black dresses, and liberal pall were shopping and going places with their families. Looking around, I could make all kinds of ethnic Afghans around me. There were Uzbeks, Hazaras, Tajiks and Pashtoons, traditional and hip, all happily socializing, forgetful of their animosities back home.

Walking into a music shop I tried to engage the owner in a conversation about his refugee life but instead he flashed a cassette of a legendary Afghan singer by the name of Ahmed Zahir into my face, that I bought promptly. His aloofness to my questions brought me into the sunshine again and this time I decided to interview the carpet dealer. But as my meager Persian ran out, the old guy's enthusiasm to be interviewed also waned, as he couldn't speak any other language. Hot and frustrated I walked over to a juice stand to cool down and vent some steam. That is when I met Sunny, a young hip Afghan guy clad in blue jeans and stylish spectacles, who could speak fluent English and was gladly willing to talk about his Afghan existence surrounded by a Pakistan reality.

Sunny hails from an educated Tajik family of Kabul where his late father once had a thriving business. But then came war and consequent miseries. Sunny's family migrated from Kabul right before Najib's regime succumbed to Mujahideen forces. Prolonged rocket attacks on the city, a war ravaged economy and a threat of Islamic battles forced them to lock their house and move to Peshawar with scant belongings. After a brief sojourn in Peshawar, the family consisting of his mother and two elder brothers shifted to Karachi where they spent five years. The two elder brothers who used to be college in Kabul got a lucky break and left for Canada where they are working and supporting the family. Sunny and his mother live in Islamabad now, in a single room apartment, waiting for a chance to migrate to Canada. Sunny is a sharp

guy for a twenty-year old. He was in middle school in Afghanistan when they had to leave. Now he doesn't go to school or work but instead attends an English language institute to sharpen his English skills for his coming years in Canada. He whines away his time hanging out at the juice stand with his friends, practicing his guitar and dreaming about Canada.



Mongol-faced Uzbeks sweating profusely over their hot Tandoors were doling out boat shaped bread to their mostly Afghan customers

When I asked him how he felt about living in Pakistan as a refugee, he smilingly informed me that life in Karachi was a drag as the people there looked down upon Afghans, and there was always trouble. But he likes Islamabad. "People here are more relaxed and friendly towards Afghans. I have made a lot of Pakistani friends, but of course there are certain problems for Afghan refugees in Islamabad. By law we are required to carry an Afghan passport stamped with a visa from the Afghan Commissionerate that is renewed every six months. The whole procedure costs about \$106, a hefty amount that is beyond the means of poor refugees, who barely scrape a living by doing menial jobs. And if you don't have a passport you get harassed by the police who demand money to let you off the hook. Even I don't have a passport but the police usually let me go when I beg and plead that I am a poor student and can't afford to buy one."



There is a story of riches to rags

Sunny's other grievance was about the UNHCR that according to him provides stipends to Iranians, and other refugees but doesn't consider the Afghans. And of course, he said, the life of a refugee is always tough, full of uncertainties and apprehensions, and there are times when he felt like an unwanted guest in this country. He told me he loves Afghanistan and will eventually consider going back to live there if things change for the better. But for right now, Canada looks more promising. His stance on the Taliban was very diplomatic. He told me that Taliban were good people who have brought a lot of peace and security in the country but he didn't agree with their strict social and religious code. He also added very openly, that Taliban were a temporary solution to a very complex Afghan problem.

Talking to Sunny and later on meeting and conversing with Afghans from various ethnic, social, financial and educational backgrounds around Karachi Company and surrounding areas, I got an interesting new insight about their community. There is a story of riches to rags. Most of the people living in these communities are educated urban people who were living rather comfortable lives in Kabul and other cities of Afghanistan. They were teachers, government employees, businessmen and other professionals who saw and experienced very little or random glimpses of actual war that was raging on in the countryside and the mountains. So they stuck it out a little longer than their rural Afghan brethren who were filling the refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran by thousands everyday to save their lives from screaming Russian MiGs and Gunship helicopters. But in the early nineties during and after the fall of Najib's regime, when things got hot with infighting among mujahedin factions and more rockets landing in the cities, a lot of these urban Afghans were forced to

► Kabul University from the Persian speaking Hazara community told THE TRIBUNE. The professor stressed anonymity, as he feared that his family could face harm from Mujahideen groups operating in Pakistan. The professor and his wife, who was also a professor in Kabul's teachers training center, do not want to restrict their ten-year old daughter and two sons to religious education alone. "I would have to grow a beard and wear a turban if I go back to Kabul University to resume my job," he said.

His wife was more concerned about her ten-year old daughter. "I don't want my daughter to receive only religious education and do an in-house job like carpet-weaving or embroidery. I want her to be a normal human being and acquire modern

**A large majority of the new refugees are Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Nooristanis and Turkmens who are being targeted by the Pakhtoon-dominated incumbent Taliban government. Unlike the first waves of refugees, the more recent refugees come from educated urban backgrounds**

education. Nowadays a woman in Kabul can not go out unless accompanied by her husband. The Taliban guards check the Nikah Namas or marriage contracts, whenever they see a couple. How can I raise my daughter in such a suffocated environment?" she asked. The professor said that he was not involved in any political activity but the Mujahideen groups targeted him for no reason. "I want to convey to the Pakistan government that if they continue to support Taliban and its discriminatory policies, the Taliban will cause trouble here as well. Almost exclusively Pashtoon, the Taliban are being trained in Pakistani madrassas. Pakistan should realize that the Taliban would try to extend the boundaries of their repressive regime at the slightest pretext," he warned.

# Brotherly reservations

migrate. Hence the latter influx of the Afghan refugees into Pakistan comprises mostly of these urbanites that have settled in Islamabad and other cities of Pakistan.

In Islamabad and I believe in other cities, strong negative stereotypes prevail about Afghans. They are viewed as criminals involved in drugs, prostitution and guns. Due to these unfounded biases people in Islamabad look down upon the Afghan refugees and allow themselves minimal contact which further widens the misperception. But things at a closer range reveal a different picture. During my interaction with the Afghan refugees in Karachi Company and the surrounding communities, I found a breed of very hard working, dignified and enterprising people striving for a clean buck. They work menial jobs, sell juices and potato chips from small stands, sell jewelry and wash cars. Some of their more fortunate brothers find better jobs and do better businesses but overall there is a community where, if needed, all members of the family, even the kids after school go out to earn bread. I didn't come across any Afghan peddlers during my time in that locality or notice any shady deals being made in the alleys. Many Pakistani shopkeepers in the market that I talked to confirmed the honesty and clean dealings of the Afghan refugees in the Karachi Company.

The most disturbing stereotype that is rampant in Islamabad, especially among the male population, that most Afghan women are loose and prostitute themselves, needs some explanation. Actually most of the Afghan women with an urban past are quite liberal in the way they carry their dress. When on the streets in Islamabad or elsewhere, they draw a lot of attention by men because of their frank gait and long flowing skirts. And when the men spread about their bad character by these ill-reputed women.

Otherwise, there is a very low percentage of Afghans involved in such crimes. To label the whole people as criminals is not justified. Tahir Shah, a juice vendor in his thirties who supports a big family, grudgingly told me that even though he worked all day to eke out a clean living, still most of the time he had to bear condescending remarks from his Pakistani customers who brand him as a drug peddler or a pimp working under the façade of the juice stand. Sheer hope for peace in his country dripped from his face as he promised to return to Afghanistan one day to live with dignity as a first class citizen rather than a disgraced refugee.

For years, people in the Frontier have accommodated the refugees, but now they are being viewed as a burden and blamed for lawlessness. While many local leaders agree that the refugees should not be forced to go back until things return to normal in Afghanistan, traders and businessmen threatened by the inroads the Afghans have made into their businesses insist that they should at least be restricted to camps. **Syed Bukhar Shah** reports from Peshawar

**RETRACTING FROM** his earlier assertion that Afghan refugees would be confined in camps from March 15, the NWFP Chief Minister, Sardar Mehtab, re-assured the refugees on March 16 that they could enjoy the hospitality of Pakistan government. Earlier on, blaming the refugees for lawlessness, he had warned the local administration of dire consequences if it failed to implement his orders. The locals were asked to give the details of Afghan refugees living in their houses. His announcement created unrest among refugees living in the province and surprised many. Neither the Foreign Office nor the Afghan Commissionerate had given any such directives. While various traders' organizations in Peshawar welcomed the government move of confining million of refugees to their camps, it invited sharp criticism from various political parties, who termed it as impossible and said they would resist it.

According to Commissioner Afghan Refugees, Gulzar Khan, the Afghan Commissionerate, Peshawar has finalized arrangements for shifting Afghan refugees from the Nasir Bagh camp located in the suburbs of Peshawar. The land currently occupied by the refugees was within the jurisdiction of the proposed 4,616 acre Regi Lalma housing scheme of the Peshawar Development Authority. Nasir Bagh is one of the oldest and biggest camps where only 66,000 refugees are registered out of the estimated 80,000 who live there. The government officials and officers of the Afghan Commissionerate avoided comment and said they had not received any plan in this connection yet. Meanwhile, a spokesman of the provincial government on March 15, said that the provincial government would not shift refugees forcibly, and would take their leaders into confidence before taking any decision in this connection. The recent ambivalence in the government's policy towards the refugees is not new. For the past 20 years, it has treated the problem in the same confused manner.

The government of Pakistan allowed the refugees to establish businesses, purchase properties, live in the cities and move freely within the country, while the government of Iran confined the refugees to their camps, keeping in view the liberal policy of Pakistan's government, the Afghan refugees started pouring in cities of the province when foreign aid was suspended in 1983-84. They made inroads in many businesses including transport, hotel and catering and properties. Many started other small trades like carpet centers, general stores, beauty parlors, and music, video, vegetable and fruit shops. They can be seen pushing handcarts in every city of the province. It is impossible for the government to now confine them to camps. They even run schools and colleges, clinics and separate bazaars. Under Taliban, only agricultural sector is improving in Afghanistan, and these refugees are not willing to return to their country unless things change for the better. Recently, the Afghan refugees in Akora Khattak had publicly announced that they would not return to their country in the present situation. The educated refugees are especially critical of Taliban's strict policies towards citizens.

The presence of Afghan refugees is now being viewed as a burden here and they have been blamed for creating law and order situation in the province. The local population was sympathetic when the Russians were still there in Afghanistan. That has changed since civil war erupted among the various groups of mujahideen. The local traders, who have been affected the most by the Afghan influx, were quick to announce support to the Chief Minister's earlier statement. A delegation of traders had assured the provincial government that they would identify every refugee in their areas. They said they had their own lists of Afghan refugees.

The political parties have their own reasons to support the presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. They are against repatriation before things return to normal in Afghanistan. But the local people repeat the famous Pushtu proverb that "a he does not" according to a prominent Pakhtoon intellectual and expert on Afghan affairs, Dr Sher Zaman Tahirai, "The Afghan refugees have no refugee status since 1992. They are now illegal immigrants here in Pakistan. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops and suspension of foreign assistance to them, these refugees should give various taxes on their incomes." The ousted Nationalis he said should do more work for the repatriation of these Afghan refugees so that they could lead a respectable life in their own country. It is commonly held that the Pakistan government has allowed them to do whatever they want in Pakistan, disregarding the international law of refugees. It is also believed that the moneyed Afghans had their links in bureaucracy and other influential circles of Pakistan.

Local leaders say the government should take action against this powerful Afghan class instead of harassing the poor and helpless Afghan refugees. This powerful Afghan class should pursue peace agreements only to protect their own interests. "They will also sabotage the recent Ashkhabad agreement." A large number of people are opposed to the presence of Afghan refugees. Neither the government nor the Afghan leaders, they say, could check the illegal activities of the influential Afghan miscreants. They have even obtained Pakistani National Identity cards and passports.

Most of the Afghans participate in the public meetings and processions of the Pakistani political parties creating misgivings among the workers of opponent parties here. "The presence of Taliban ministers in various functions of the religious-political parties of Pakistan has also created hatred among the locals," said a former Afghan leader on the condition of anonymity. The Taliban ministers and their activities in Pakistan have influenced some youths in Southern districts of the NWFP and they have formed an organization called Pakistani Taliban. This is an alarming development for the moderate locals of the area.



The presence of Afghan refugees is now being viewed as a burden here and they have been blamed for creating law and order situation in the province

Photo from UNHCR Bulletin

09

► The family of the professor, currently residing in Islamabad, was quite well-off in Afghanistan until their part of the city was rocked by rocket launchers in late 1993. They immediately left Afghanistan and came to Pakistan on a bus. They preferred not to reside in the refugee camp. "My wife and I searched for jobs in Islamabad but despite our vast experience we were not able to find any for a long time. We finally got jobs in OPF School on a measly 3000-rupee salary, but after six months we were asked to quit," he said. Currently the family depends on the income the couple generates by giving private tuition. They have to dish out US\$ 106 after every six months for the renewal of their passports. Similarly, many Afghan families are finding it difficult to survive in Pakistan. Some of them prefer to be illegal immigrants, as they don't have the money to renew their passports. They also do not want to reside in refugee camps where life is difficult in mud huts and tents.



The Afghan Embassy in Pakistan is most bothered about the misuses of the refugees, as they belong to communities that are unemployable as viewed by the Taliban government. When THE TRIBUNE contacted the Embassy for information about the steps taken by the Taliban government for the refugees, it was told that there is no 'responsible' person in the Embassy who could talk on the issue. The Afghan refugees living in cities do not get help from UNHCR either, as it only caters to the refugees living in camps. However the agency does provide scholarships and other assistance to the refugees living in urban areas of Pakistan.

According to Dr Altaf Rehman, a consultant at Afghan Commissionerate, established by Government of Pakistan, the Afghan refugees are hard-working people. "They have taken small businesses like selling flowers, potato chips or qahwa, working in beauty parlors,

# She is not a

Displaced by war, a former Afghan General's daughter now works in a beauty parlor to support her mother, younger brothers and a father who has become a mental patient. She is scared of Pakistani men who harass her, thinking she is up for sale

## Zubia Zubair

**FAHMINA MIGRATED** to Pakistan from Kabul in December 1993 along with her family. Her father, who was a teacher and former General in the Afghan army during General Najibullah's reign, woke them up at about three in the morning, telling them to collect all their valuables and most useful items because they were leaving for Pakistan. Her mother and elder sister had come fifteen days before her. She thought she was to return after a few months.

They came to Pakistan on a van they had hired. One of their neighbors back home was a trader who used to keep traveling to Pakistan. Her father spoke to him about going to Pakistan for a few months and thus it was he who arranged a private van for them. They paid 200,000 Afghani for the journey. On reaching Peshawar at about 8 p.m. they stayed a night at the driver's place since they did not know anyone there, and it was too late to continue their journey to Islamabad. For a month they stayed with their father's sister in Islamabad, and then they rented their own place, a portion of a single-story house somewhere in I-10. They had brought along enough money with them as theirs was a well-off family back home and they owned a lot of land in Parwan. Thus money was not a problem in the beginning.

When she came to Pakistan six years ago, she did not know the language. So the first thing she, along with her elder sister and younger brothers, did was to join an English language center. The younger ones went to school as well. With the help of an auntie in the neighborhood, she managed to learn Urdu. Since she was interested in cosmetology and hairdressing she joined a beauty parlor in the area for a beautician's course, and joined the parlor as a paid employee afterwards. This brought in money and experience. Her family of five brothers and four sisters is dependent on her and her brother who is a few years younger to her and teaches at Jinnah Public School. Her salary is used at home while that of her brother is used to pay the rent. Her father, who was once a very disciplined and strict armyman, has become a mental patient.

She was in the first year of college when her family migrated. There was no dress code or restriction that you had to follow in Afghanistan. "We used to wear jeans and long skirts mostly, and dupattas were optional. I used to wear jeans mostly to college and at home, whereas formally, for weddings and all, skirts would do. Some women used to wear scarves but that too was entirely up to you. The skirts however had to be below your knees. Our colleges used to offer scholarships for higher education abroad. Whether they were boys or girls that did not matter. They were mostly sent to Russia or Poland. We had the semester system in our colleges and after completing each three-month semester, we used to get a sort of stipend from the government."

Fahmina's family used to spend the winter vacations in their village—Qila Mirza, in Parwan. "We didn't get any summer vacation, only three months of winter vacation. Our village was very beautiful." Most of her mother's relatives and her father's elder brother live in the village. "We used to have a lot of fun and enjoy a lot in the village. We would arrange picnics by the river, Dariya-e-Panisher, that ran through our village. Afghanistan is very rich in fruits and our favorites were grapes and a fruit called 'Tut'. One of us, among our cousins or brothers, would climb the tree and the rest would stand underneath holding a large piece of cloth to collect the fruit in. We were a naughty bunch, especially when we were all together. I used to love sitting by the river—it was so clean and pure and peaceful. We used to sing a lot when we were all

The Taliban do not allow women to go out unaccompanied, they have shut down all women schools, colleges and universities. Where does Islam stop women from getting education?



together. Our people too were great. You will not find such kind, hospitable and loving people anywhere in the world." Here she broke down, crying with pain and grief.

Talking about the general atmosphere in Kabul and Afghanistan she said, "Things were never as bad as they are today. Women were highly respected and could go anywhere they liked. No one would dare do anything unbecoming. Of course at night you had to be accompanied by someone. One has to be careful no matter what, and there are good and bad people in every society. Okay, men used to eve-tease sometimes, but that was all. Here they go around bumping into you or touching you, physically abusing you."

"We are Tajik, Dari speaking. We just considered ourselves Muslims and that's all. I did not even know about the Shia or Sunni distinction

► washing cars and collecting garbage. They have almost replaced the Pakistani labor in many lower rungs. Since they are hard-working people, therefore they do not hesitate in taking up small jobs," he said.

Dr Altat dismissed the common notion that the Afghan refugees are involved in criminal activities. "There may be some exceptions but generally the Afghans are not involved in any crimes," he insisted. However the police in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad claimed that the Afghans were involved in serious crimes like murders and dacoities. Inspector Raza Shah of Islamabad Police Public Relations Department said that out of every ten criminal cases, the Afghans were involved in three or four. However the record of Police department for the crimes committed in 1998 belies his claim. According to the Police record, a total of 2627 crimes of various natures were reported in Islamabad during 1998, out of which the Afghans were involved in only 31 cases. Though some of them have been charged with serious crimes like murders and dacoities, but most of the crimes involving Afghans revolve around personal squabbles and enmities.

Dr Altat also dispelled the common perception that Afghan girls are of an easy virtue. "Most of the Afghan girls currently residing in Pakistan belonged to northern part of Afghanistan where wearing skirts and putting on heavy make-up is a routine. By judging them as prostitutes is very unfair. Though there may be some who engage in such trade, you can't put all of them in the same category," he said.

At the same time, the Afghan program of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is currently facing its worst-ever funding crisis that started last year. The future looks very bleak in years to come. So far in 1999 UNHCR has only received one contribution for its Afghanistan program from the Swedish government. UNHCR had to borrow US\$ 1 million from its central repatriation fund, which has to be repaid.

The reason, according to the agency, is that the issue of Afghan repatriation becomes a very difficult subject to sell in distant donor capitals. "Taliban-held Afghanistan was prominent in the headlines for a string of entirely negative reasons. It was playing host to the world's most wanted terrorist—Osama Bin Laden. The Taliban were criticized for their discriminatory policies against women. And UNHCR ►



# Prostitute



before I came here. Now things have really gone bad. The Taliban do not allow women to go out unaccompanied, they have shut down all women schools, colleges and universities. Where does Islam stop women from getting education? They are supposed to deliver babies at home and not in hospitals. They cannot walk side by side along with men and have to walk a step behind them."

When war broke out all schools, colleges and universities were shut down. People were scared to leave their homes for fear of not returning alive. There was shortage of food and people were deprived of the basic necessities of life—medicine, health and education. "We were terrified as firing used to start suddenly, at any time of day or night. Then we had to hide in our basement. There was a time when we hid in the basement for two whole days because the firing wouldn't stop, without any food, and my mother was expecting my youngest brother. It was around one

► wanted money to facilitate repatriation to this place?" the UNICRI Afghan Bulletin stated while quoting the apprehension of the donors.

By January 1, 1999, a total of 4.08 million Afghan refugees had returned home. However, more than 2.6 million still live in Pakistan. A large percentage has migrated from urban areas including Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar Sharif. They believe that their homeland is not a safe place till warring Afghan factions reach a consensus amongst them. The repatriation from Pakistan dipped to a record low during the past three years.

A UNICRI spokesman stated on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan observed a few weeks ago: "While it was the Soviet invasion

o'clock in the morning and none of the doctors were willing to come and see her. Her labor pains were getting worse and we were at our wit's end because we did not know what to do." She still shivers at the thought and says, "I don't know how but it was my eldest sister who delivered the baby. I was kept out of the room and she managed it alone." But the last straw was when a rocket landed in their home. That was when her parents decided that it was time to leave.

Her father she says had retired before the mujahideen came to Kabul and war broke out around 1990. It was then that things started changing. Her father's eldest brother who is a farmer and looks after their land in the village also suffered at the hands of the mujahideen. They murdered his wife and her body was hidden in the basement of a deserted house. For about three months they did not know what had happened to her and thought she had been abducted. Her body was found in the basement by some children who went there by chance looking for their football. And as the weather is cold most of the time, the body did not give off any smell."

In 1996 they went back to Afghanistan. This time they went on the bus that goes from Peshawar to Kabul. "The minute I saw Kabul I broke down in tears—my beautiful city had been destroyed and lay in shambles. I just couldn't stop the tears from rolling down." They had gone to bring back their uncle's children. They did not stay in Kabul and got a connecting bus from there to go straight to their village that is an hour's drive from Kabul. She stayed there for a week and came back with one of their relatives. Her mother returned after another week with the children, who now live with them and are in school. This time, she says, she did not feel like staying there because it hurt her too much. Everything had changed and the mirth had gone out of life. Food is scarce, there is no electricity, no water, nothing. Women are forced to wear hijab and if they don't then the Taliban lash out at them or throw acid on their faces. In 1998 her father managed to go back to Afghanistan because they needed financial assistance. He went to his brother who looks after their land and he was successful in getting some money. The Taliban confiscated everything he had on his way back.

"People are reluctant to rent out their houses or apartments to us thinking that they might get into some sort of trouble or we might be involved in some illegal business or terrorism. And if they do rent them out, then they expect us to pay a very high rent. Mostly we are asked to vacate the house/apartment after six months." Women in Pakistan, she says, have always been kind and helpful but it is the men who really bother her. "They harass you in different ways. When I dress up like an Afghan, I am hounded by men who think that I am a call-girl or something. I now wear only shalwar kameez. It's the social persecution that kills you."

Once while shopping at the Mangal bazaar, a guy pushed her younger sister who fell in the drain. She hit her head against a rock and had to get seven stitches and stay for a night in the hospital. Since then she is scared to go out. She just goes to school accompanied by her mother now. It is a ten-minute walk from the bus stop to the parlor where Fahmina works and she says that the slightest noise startles her. She keeps looking back just to check whether she's being followed or not. One morning, while walking towards the bus stop from her home, she was pinched on her back by a guy who ran off. This is the kind of attitude she dreads among our people. "They want to hurt you for no reason. Maybe they get some perverted pleasure out of it."

Her youngest brother was just six-month old when they came to Pakistan and he remembers nothing of his homeland. He considers himself a *pakka* Pakistani now and not an Afghan. She herself feels somewhat like a Pakistani now. But she says she'd like to go back one day. She would like to complete her education if she ever gets a chance. She wants the war to stop, schools to reopen and life to get back to normal in her country. She says that if war were to end today, she would go back immediately. But not under the rule of the Taliban as they are fanatics. "They would probably kill me for working as a beautician." She veils the hurt and pain behind a smile and shows me the henna she has put on her hands.

(Fahmina is not her real name)

**Inspector Raza Shah of Islamabad Police Public Relations Department said that out of every ten criminal cases, the Afghans were involved in three or four. However the record of Police department for the crimes committed in 1998 belies his claim. According to the Police record, a total of 2627 crimes of various natures were reported in Islamabad during 1998, out of which the Afghans were involved in only 31 cases**

and occupation of Afghanistan that caused the majority of refugees to flee, it is subsequent events—almost uninterrupted fighting between constantly shifting alliances of Afghan political groups and militias, continued human rights abuses, and a shattered economy and infrastructure—that is preventing the final settlement of the Soviet legacy."

"Urban refugees, who arrived long after the Soviet withdrawal are unlikely to return home until they feel that the fighting has stopped and that their chief social aspirations, especially employment and education, will be satisfied. In short only an all-embracing political peace agreement will finally bring an end to the world's largest and longest running refugee crisis," the spokesman said. ●

# Inside Taliban Land

From Zahid Husain  
in Kabul  
Photos: B. K. Bingham—AP

A tiny bronze scale oscillates between two daggers clumsily hung on the wall

behind a shabby sofa on which the chief of Kabul's military court is seated. The small room is filled with people who have come to seek justice. Judge Saeed Rehman Afgha, one of the most powerful men in the Taliban administration in Kabul, quietly listens to a bearded old man pleading for mercy for his son who is languishing in the capital's dreaded Pul-e-Charkhi prison on suspicion of working for the opposition. "I am ordering his release, but tell your son not to indulge in such activities again," Afgha warns the old man.

Others, however, have not been lucky enough to escape the harsh punishments doled out by the military court. With first-time accused of crime and of being accomplices of crime, they are all sentenced to hang. Last week, 10 men were hanged in the courtyard of the prison in Kabul at the end of 1996, the court has convicted more than 2,000 people for crimes ranging from theft to adultery and murder.

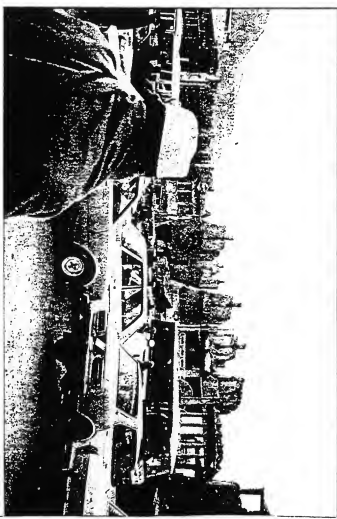


Thousands of men and women converge on Kabul's only sports stadium to watch the gruesome spectacle of the hundreds of alleged thieves being dropped off, numbers being shot dead by members of the Taliban and those accused of adultery being stoned to death. The bodies are then buried from walking sports events in the stadium are encouraged to witness public executions. The dropped limbs are then left hanging at the city center for days on end.

Since the second Friday of February, however, the Khalabs have been deprived of witnessing the "only sport in town," as the crime rate in the capital has fallen drastically. "We don't have any convicted prisoners," says Saeed Rehman, the judge in the court. He says the Taliban have led to the harsh Islamic punishments and their public demonstration.

There is a measure of truth to the claim that Kabul under Taliban rule is much more peaceful. One can travel on the roads without fear of being looted by armed thugs who reaped over the capital during the Russian mujahideen government. "For the first time in 10 years, the city has been free from being attacked by men of bundles of Kalashnikovs," says the *Kabar*, a local shopkeeper.

▲ An uneasy peace descends on Kabul.



However, the pervasive calm in Kabul and other Taliban-controlled areas has come at enormous social and political cost. The Taliban, Islamists, have imposed a strict code of behavior on the population. Women, who once comprised more than 50 percent of the teachers, doctors, university students and

course of history, and push the country back to the medieval ages. The social and political impact of Taliban rule may not be felt as much in the rural and provincial areas as in the capital, but the effects are still being felt. Women, who once comprised more than 50 percent of the teachers, doctors, university students and



administration has started renovating the ramshackle buildings but normal academic activities have not been fully restored. Their headline obscurantist world view has also cast a heavy shadow over the education system.

The total number of students at Kabul University and engineering and medical colleges is now half of what it was just a few years ago. The majority of senior professors and teachers have left the country, causing a massive decline in standards. "We want the students to be true Muslims," maintains Hamdullah Noonan, minister for higher education in the Taliban administration, while insisting there has not been any change in the education system and it is strictly according to UNESCO's guidelines.

But the reality is quite different. In one of its first moves to Islamise the education system, the Taliban administration threw out all girl students who comprised more than 50 per cent of the total number of students at Kabul University. Similarly, female teachers were also sacked, which has caused a further decline in the numbers of academic staff. "There are only two teachers in departments where there used to be ten," says Saif Rehman, a Kabul University student. "The administration has also added new subjects on religion which, according to the officials, will help in making us better Muslims."

Medical education, perhaps, has suffered the most because of the so-called Islamisation of the education system. Dissection of the human body, which is an essential part of the medical teaching, has been banned for being un-Islamic. A large number of medical teaching staff comprised women, and their sacking has caused a further deterioration in the standards of medical education which had already suffered because of the large-scale migration of senior doctors. "Only a few professors are left and the technicians are given teaching jobs," maintains a senior doctor. "One can imagine what kind of doctors will be produced in this situation."

Dr. Zahir Mehtarzai, who has taught in the medical college for the past 14 years and is one of the few teachers who stayed back, says, "What is happening is not good. Everybody can see the poor academic conditions." Ironically, the vice-chancellor of

Kabul Medical College is Moulvi Mohammed Zairi, a young man in his 30s who has only graduated from a madrasah in Peshawar. His knowledge of medical education is as good as that of any layman.

"We have some difficulties, but things have improved," he claims on an optimistic note.

The university student dropout rate has also increased substantially in recent years.

"There are no incentives or job opportunities for fresh graduates," says Mohammed Jafri, a student of English literature at Kabul University.

Economic problems have also been a major reason for students having to leave the university. Although

education and boarding are free, few can afford to send their sons for education. Students also complain of the stifling atmosphere.

The situation in schools is far worse. The enrolment has dwindled because of poverty and other social factors.

Moreover, the ban on women teachers has led to a general decline in school education. According to one estimate, more than 70 per cent of the school teachers in Kabul were female and their forced exit has left a vacuum which the Taliban

authorities are incapable of filling.

Taliban leaders insist that they are not opposed to female education but there is no indication of women resuming

education under the present leadership. "The decision to resume female education depends on an improvement in the economic and security situation and the opinion of the people," declares Hamdullah

Noonan. It is apparent that such a favourable situation may never occur during Taliban rule. The majority of Taliban activists, who themselves have no proper school education and come from a conservative tribal background, would never want women to have a secular education.

The Taliban administration has its own paradoxes. While it has enforced its own brand of harsh Islamic Shariah rule, it has established rudimentary institutions which offer a semblance of governance. The courts are working at various levels and order has been restored. A major factor which has helped restore peace and

order is the Taliban's policy of not allowing to carry guns in the city. The tough action taken by the Islamic authorities also brought an end to the control of warlords over different parts of the capital. It is also significant that after several years of chaos and anarchy, the Taliban forces have established centralised rule over a large part of Afghanistan.

Kabul is a multi-ethnic city, largely inhabited by Tajiks, Pashtuns and the Shiite Hazara. Being a predominantly Pashtun organisation, the Taliban

Islamic Movement has never been able to secure the support of ethnic minorities and that may be the reason why it is much more ruthless in enforcing its authority in this city. In sharp contrast to its tough policy in Kabul, the administration appears much more relaxed in Pashtun cities like Jalalabad and Kandahar. Resentment of the headline Taliban rule and a sense of insecurity among the minorities are very much evident in Kabul. It is not surprising that all the top government positions are occupied by Pashtuns from Kandahar and Jalalabad.

Kabul may be the seat of the government, but Kandahar is the spiritual capital of the Taliban administration. Mulla Omar, the founder and patriarch of the Taliban movement, guides the administration from his headquarters there. The Islamic movement is dominated by hardliners and although there is a liberal element which favours a more moderate course, its voice appears too weak to have any significant impact.

The conservative Islamic movement appears well-entrenched in power, but given the Afghan reality of an ethnically divided country, it may not be long before its authority is faced with a serious challenge. Its obscurantist and reactionary worldview is likely to provoke a backlash which may prove difficult for its forces to control. ■

# Soldiers of God

Starting out as an amorphous movement aimed at flushing out the corrupt warlords in western Afghanistan, the Taliban militia has now emerged as a battle-hardened and well-organised military force.



By Zahid Hussain

Since he left his home at a refugee camp near Peshawar in Pakistan to join the Taliban militia that has taken control of much of western Afghanistan, he has been in the front line leading opposition forces. He has seen his colleagues being killed, but is not afraid of dying.

"It is our tradition to fight. When I am on a battlefield I feel as if I am in a room full of flowers," he says, while standing beside a heavy machine gun in Paktia province, some 20 kilometres north of Kabul, the latest front line in the war between the Taliban and the forces of Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Twenty-two-year-old Latifur is among the thousands of young Afghans who grew up in refugee camps in Pakistan and joined the Taliban Islamic Movement to fight against what they described as corrupt, unislamic, mujahideen groups. They have seen their war become dedicated by the war

against former Soviet occupation forces. "I will keep fighting against the enemies of God," says Latifur.

The Taliban, who have won spectacular victories over their adversaries, are an army of young men sporting worn out rubber sandals and soiled shalwar kameez in below freezing temperatures. These soldiers of God got their military training in the battlefield and a majority of them are illiterate. The war seems to be unending and many of them will never return home. In many cases, the entire family is involved in the war of attrition, and provide their services on a rotation basis. Latifur's two younger brothers who are currently looking after the family in Pakistan, are also Taliban activists. "One of my brothers will take my place on the front when I go back home for a few months in the summer," says Latifur.

Most of the senior members and commanders have participated in the war against the forces of the former Soviet Union and joined the Taliban militia largely because of their disillusionment with the corrupt mujahideen leaders who kept liberating the war-devastated country. "They moved away from the right path and were fighting only for their vested interests," says Mithdal, a post commander of the Taliban forces in Paktia-Saidan. Mithdal, whose family came from Kandahar to Pakistan in the 1980s, is in his mid-50s now and has studied in a madrasah for more than eight years. During that period, he took time out to participate in the war against communist rule. "Our war was not against the establishment of a new Islamic system in Afghanistan, it was against the forces of godlessness to complete his religious education after the 'god is achieved'," though he is not sure when this will happen.

Most of the Taliban fighters and commanders are pushlows from the western Afghan province of Kandahar, which is now the spiritual capital of the conservative Islamic militia as well as the home of Ahmad Shahmassoud, Mulla Omar. Other Pushtun-speaking areas in eastern Afghanistan also provide

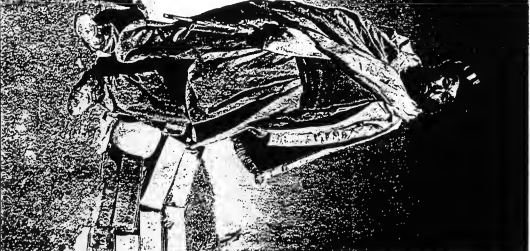
men for the fighting force. Thousands of madrasah students from Pakistan have joined their comrades in war to establish a conservative order based on a strict and puritan interpretation of Islam. There are, however, very few ethnic minorities in the militia though Taliban leaders do not have a large number of Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks, are joining the ranks.

Starting as an amorphous movement which aimed at flushing out the corrupt warlords who reigned in western Afghanistan, the Taliban militia has now emerged as a battle-hardened and well-organised military force. This

development is a cause of concern among the forces of the former Soviet Union in Pakistan but also neighbouring central Asian countries and Iran. It is evident that Pakistan played a crucial role in turning the Taliban forces into a formidable military machine, but in the long run it may cost the country dearly.

The spillover of the Talibanisation of Afghanistan can be seen in several Pakistani tribal areas. The war-hardened Pakistan Taliban are already involved in a bitter sectarian war which threatens the social fabric of Pakistan society ■

Twenty-two-year old Latifur is among the thousands of young Afghans who grew up in refugee camps in Pakistan and joined the Taliban Islamic Movement to fight against what they described as corrupt, unislamic mujahideen groups. They have seen nothing but war since their families were displaced by the war against former Soviet occupation forces. "I will keep fighting against the enemies of God," says Latifur.





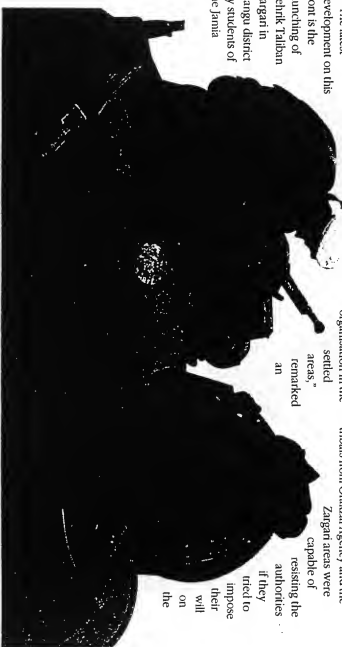
# Frontier Taliban

By Beliroz Khan

Self-selected Taliban organisations go around raiding houses and burning TV sets and dish antennas in the Frontier to purge the society of what they brand un-Islamic practices.

Following in the footsteps of the Taliban Islamic Movement in Afghanistan, students from religious schools in the north as well as secular areas of the Frontier have organised their own Islamic Movement in the Frontier, with they believe purging the society of practices and to provide quick justice to people in accordance with the Shariah.

The latest development on this front is the launching of Tehrik Taliban Zargari in Hangu district by students of the jinnia



in the house-to-house searches to be conducted from time to time. However, the relevant official quarters continue to pay down the development and the political authorities of Chakzai Agency believe that the movement began by the students of the jinnia is not the same practice had by the Taliban.

"We have vague for a knowledge of any Taliban organisation in the settled areas," remarked an official of the Chakzai Agency. "If they tried to impose their will on the elders and maulis to resist the implementation of the Shariah laws in the area, Jhalai maintained that the Taliban movement in the country needs to be supported by the Shariat government. The Taliban government should encourage the Taliban to their own way," said Jhalai adding that tribals from Chakzai Agency and the Zargaris were capable of

a continuous comprising ulama, tribal

elders and maulis to resist the

implementation of the Shariah laws in

the area. Jhalai maintained that the

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said Jhalai adding that tribals from Chakzai Agency and the

Zargaris were capable of

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their

will

on the

the

official of the Hangu district

administration.

"We are indebted to the Taliban

government of Afghanistan for laying

the foundation of an Islamic state

The movement launched by the Taliban

is unprecedented," remarked Syed

Hazrat Hussain Jhalai. He has been

minimously elected Amir of the

movement, which will be supervised by

organisation. In the next phase, Jhalai

plans to introduce capital punishment,

which would include Qisas and Hadd,

In the light of the Quran and Sunnah,

"The basic fact of this case will be

dropped off and all criminal will be

brought to justice in accordance with

Islamic laws," vowed Jhalai.

In the Federally Administered Tribal

Areas (FATA), where Tehrik-i-Taliban

Orakzai was launched three years ago by Abdullah Muhammad Islam Farooqi, the Shari'at courts set up by the movement have been established. Farooqi, who has been arrested, is said to be on his way to the Frontier. The courts are thought to have been established to the existing ground and shot dead by the Shariat Khan's two brothers in the presence of some 2000 people in the Khatkhat village.

The armed wing of the organisation parents areas around the clock and its actions continue. It has rounded up a number of people in Bannu on charges of taking part in egg-throwing competitions and awarded them on denials as punishment.

The Tehrik-i-Taliban has been active not only in the Zargari, Chakzai, Khyber Agency and Shikhar areas of Hangu, but also in Lohi, Marwat and Bannu districts for the last few months. The local Taliban organisation in Lohi Marwat is currently engaged in confiscating drugs and obscene video and audio cassettes by raiding music centres.

More than 3000 cassettes were burnt at a public place in Lohi on January 28. The district



heavy all dish antennas and remove TV sets from their houses to ward off the conspiracies of the infidel west and save the new Muslim generation. Students from religious schools, led by their teachers, recently stormed a cinema house in Bannu, burnt and ransacked the furniture and ransacked the staff for showing films on Bannu, has witnessed the worst form of rape in recent times. People attacked the local police station and burnt the historic gate of the old city following the arrest of a young boy by a police constable who was found refused to have sex with him. Curfew was imposed and the city was handed over to the army. So the situation is extremely volatile. On the subject of women's education, Taliban leaders maintain that there is no bar on female education upto the primary level. However, a spokesman for the Tehrik Taliban Zargari, Shoor Khan, says that girls are required to observe purdah in accordance with Islamic teachings after reaching adolescence. "We will seek guidance from the Taliban Islamic Movement of Afghanistan regarding granting permission to female adults to continue their education," says Khan. In several parts of Chakzai like Dhorot, Mushki Mela and Khatkhat Mela, the Taliban movement has ensured that all shops are shut on Fridays and during prayers time every day by hoisting black flags—a symbol of peace introduced by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Jhalai is confident that the movement will not add to the existing tension between the

tribal sectarian groups in Hangu district. The Mahantabad-based Tehrik Shariat-i-Muhammadiyah of Mahantabad is already giving a tough time to the provincial coalition government of Sindh. Sharif Ahmad Khan, Sindh's second militant outfit has emerged on the scene with their own agenda, especially the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's campaign for the imposition of the Shariah. Mahantabad is faced with a virtual judicial vacuum at the moment, and the situation in the rest of the province seems to be rapidly changing in favour of these movements which promise swift justice to a people fed up with lengthy court procedures and the rampant corruption. The development taking place across the province are bound to encourage the Tehrik Ulema-i-Qadiri Bari to restart its activities. This Tehrik was banned by the government on charges of running a parallel administration. In fact, paramilitary troops had to be rushed to Bannu and other parts of the Khyber Agency to quell the insurgency stirred by the tribals and supported by armed bandits from the remote Tribal valley. The Frontier government has finally woken up to the dangers of the situation and in a somewhat belated move, issued directives to the commissioners of all the seven divisions and political agents of the tribal agencies to deal firmly with the 'rebels' and try to bring the Taliban 'back into the fold'. The government will not allow parallel bodies to exercise what is essentially state authority. This is not in the interests of the society," said a senior government official. ■



# The Holy Warrior

A profile of the man behind the Taliban Islamic Movement in Afghanistan...

Mulla Mohammad Omar Mujahid doesn't hold any formal office in Afghanistan, yet he is the most powerful man in this country. He was virtually unknown outside his native Maiwand district in Kandahar province in southwestern Afghanistan until September 1994, when he founded the Taliban Islamic Movement and he is still a leader few really know, owing to his reclusive nature.

For the Taliban, Mulla Omar is the Amirul Momineen (commander of the faithful), whose commands must be obeyed. As their supreme military commander, he is also the head of the Lashkar-i-Mohammadi, named after the Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh).

Mulla Omar is a tall, stockily-built man who looks older than his 'official' age of 37. He was wounded four times during the Afghan jihad against the Soviet occupation troops and the communist regime in Kabul, and also lost his right eye. This gave his opponents the chance to make fun of him as the one-eyed Taliban leader. As a small-time military commander of the mujahideen group, Hezb-i-Islami (Khalis), he earned a reputation as a crack marksman who accounted for many Russian tanks with anti-tank missiles. He also won respect as someone who never moved to Pakistan

and stayed put to fight the jihad in his homeland.

The Taliban leader has had a humble upbringing. His family once had to shift to the neighbouring Urozgan province in search of livelihood. When they returned to their native Kandahar, Mulla Omar took up a job as an Imam in a small mosque in Singesar village in Maiwand district. In fact, Mulla Omar was never able to complete his own education, and to this day he regrets having abandoned his madrasa to take up the gun when Moscow invaded Afghanistan. That is the reason why he prefers calling himself a Talib (one who seeks) rather than a Mulla (one who gives). However, his followers insist on calling him Mulla and adding 'Mujahid' and 'Akhund' to his name as a mark of respect.

The turbaned, bearded Mulla Omar has now shifted to a newly-built house in Kandahar and drives an expensive Land Cruiser with tinted glass windows. Earlier, he used to sit cross-legged on the carpeted floor of his small office in the company of his Taliban. Since becoming the Amirul Momineen, he sits on a bed while the Taliban are seated at his feet on the floor. His security was once lax and low-key - now it is tight and visible. He still dresses simply and is a man with few needs.

Mulla Omar shuns journalists and

diplomats but is always accessible to the Taliban. Shores of every description can be seen outside his office as all visitors, according to the Afghan custom, have to walk barefooted into the carpeted room while seeking an audience.

Mulla Omar is neither a man of letters nor a great orator, but his Taliban followers have come to believe in his spiritual powers and are willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause he has charted for his four-and-a-half-year old movement. The Taliban still narrate with relish how Mulla Omar first raised the banner of revolt against Mujahideen rule in his Singesar madrasa in the autumn of 1994 in the presence of only 30 followers, and laid the foundations for a movement that scored miraculous military victories against far more formidable foes.

In an interview with this writer in early 1995, the first ever granted by him after launching the Taliban Movement, Mulla Omar said his two major aims were to restore peace in Afghanistan and enforce an Islamic system of governance and justice. "Ours is a jihad against those who brought suffering on the Afghan people and violated Islamic teachings. I am ready to sacrifice everything in order to complete the unfinished agenda of our noble jihad against Afghan communists and Soviet invaders and fulfil the aspirations of our martyrs. The Taliban will fight till there is no bloodshed in Afghanistan and Islam becomes a way of life for our people." This is how he explained his agenda at the time, and it is still being pursued by the Taliban in Afghanistan. ■

## Separate university for Afghans being established

Nation 990306

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR - In the wake of frequent demands of the Afghan nationals, the Afghan Refugees Commissionerate is considering an single Afghan University enabling the Afghan youths to get further education.

Following intensified in-fighting among the warring Afghan factions in each and every corner of Afghanistan, a large number of the students as well as their teachers were left with no other option except to leave their motherland as well as their educational institutions. The Afghan educationists who were rendered homeless by in-fighting, had established educational institutions on their own and later on number of the universities reached five in Peshawar.

No doubt that there was no common syllabus or study procedure of such universities and the managements have to receive their choiced fees and charges from the students. However, the NWFP government in previous June, without issuing any notification, ordered closure of all such institutions, thus making jobless scores of teachers and educationists as jobless and depriving thousands of students of their right of educa-

tion.

In retaliation, the affected Afghans as well as their public opinion makers knocked at each and every door to convince the NWFP government for reopening of such educational institutions. In this connection, the Peshawar based Afghan Consul General and Vice Consul have also engaged themselves in a series of meetings with the high ranking local authorities. But all of their efforts became useless and meaningless.

Taking a notice of the growing unrest among the Afghan nationals, the Afghan Refugees Commissioner Mr Gulzar Khan convened a meeting with the administrators of all closed Afghan universities and discussed ways and means for establishment of the single Afghan University with them. Basic purpose of such initiatives is to enable all Afghan youths of getting a similar education under an established framework. These Afghans who had attended the meeting were included Prof. Mir Mohammad Ijaz, Prof. Mohammad Ihsan Ul Qamar, Prof. Mohammad Nadar Hadi, Prof. Pari Siddiqui, Mohammad Nadar Hassass, Saqib, Mohammad Malang, Prof Malaia Salim Dr Hazrat Meer Totakhel and

others.

Both the sides agreed to continue consultations with each other for resolving the matter and for this purpose they established several commissions. The number of students, enrolled in all of closed universities was around 5,000 and during the discussion, it was suggested that site for the proposed single university could be selected for accommodating all such students. Similarly, a committee was constituted to frame a syllabubs for such a university as well as to decide about the subjects and disciplines in such university.

An Afghan educationist, when contacted said that now they are hopeful about reopening of the universities and he praised the Afghan Refugees Commissioner. Gulzar Khan for his positive thinking regarding opening of a single university with a unanimous syllabus and academic procedure.

It was further learnt that after amalgamating all universities in private sector, the Afghan Refugees Commissionerate would initiate steps for introduction of a unanimous syllabus and procedure for all other Afghan colleges and schools operating in various parts of the province.